

**THE MOBILIZATION OF HONDURAN BAPTISTS
TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION THROUGH THE
CREATION OF AN INDIGENOUS SENDING AGENCY**

A THESIS

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DEDICATION

To the memory of Larry and Jean Elliott, whose lives and deaths enabled Honduran Baptists to mobilize for global missions

ABSTRACT

I began by creating a manual of questions that focused the attention of a select group of Honduran Baptist pastors on what would need to be done to create an indigenous sending agency for Honduran Baptists. An effort was made to avoid asking the questions in ways that would lead to the development of a sending agency that did not fit the context of Honduras Baptist mission efforts. If Honduran Baptists are to fulfill the Great Commission in a global manner, they must have a sending agency that reflects their culture and values instead of one that is copied from another culture.

The pastors were chosen because of their experience in missions or because they had demonstrated a strong interest in learning as much as possible about enabling their churches to fulfill the Great Commission. The six pastors who were invited to form the working group had all been recommended by their peers. They were encouraged to work through the manual without any input from missionaries or other outsiders.

The result was a sending agency that was designed by and for Honduran Baptists. It is poised to provide a means for sending Honduran Baptists to other parts of the world as missionaries as well as to serve as a catalyst for missions education and training among the Baptist churches of Honduras.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

Throughout Latin America there is a growing interest in sending cross-cultural missionaries. In some countries of Latin America there is already a well-developed global missions consciousness, but in others it is only in its nascent stages. C. René Padilla says “A sign of the great vitality of Protestant churches in Latin America today is the development, on its own, of a new missionary movement.”¹

It is the purpose of this thesis to encourage and enable Honduran Baptists to take the necessary steps to be able to mobilize themselves to fulfill both the Great Commission and Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8 that they will be witnesses “unto the ends of the earth.” The best approach to mobilizing themselves is to create a sending agency. C. Peter Wagner identified four phases of missionary evolution in national churches, with the fourth phase being the launching of missions agencies.² The ‘great vitality’ that Padilla refers to is due to the churches of Latin America having attained a greater level of maturity.

¹ C. René Padilla, ed., *Bases Bíblicas de la Misión* (Buenas Aires: Nueva Creación, 1998), ix. (Translation mine)

² C. Peter Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 176-177.

For many Latin American Baptists, and this is especially true of Honduran Baptists, there has been a tendency to think of themselves only in the role of receivers of the Good News, not the takers of that message to other parts of the world. “For years, we Latins saw ourselves as a missionary field, the target of the missionary projects of other nations. Indeed, we often convinced ourselves that we had little to contribute to the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth, and we grew used to the idea that mission was something that others did.”³

Another way of seeing this distinction has been presented by Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi as the difference between being the subject of mission activity and being the object of it. The Hondurans have seen themselves as the object of missions, or that which is acted upon by outside forces. They have only recently begun to think of themselves as being subjects, or those who do the activity of missions.⁴

Until recently the Honduran Baptists thought only in terms of local and same culture (Jerusalem and Judean) missions. Even their efforts in same culture missions have been limited and without dramatic success. They, too, thought they ‘had little to contribute to the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth.’ A history of the Baptist work in Honduras and their mission efforts is included in this chapter.

A significant challenge to this thesis has been to overcome the obstacle of inertia. Partly because of problems in the recent past, and partly because of ongoing conflicts within the Honduras Baptist Convention, it has been difficult to initiate this

³ Christopher Shaw, “Awakening Pastoral Care in Latin American Missions,” in *Doing Member Care Well*, ed. Kelly O’Donnell (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002), 155.

⁴ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi. *Mission: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 5-6.

long-overdue process. I was convinced from the outset of this project that once the convention leaders began working toward the creation of a missionary sending agency, the progress would be sustained. My objective was to enable them, through the manual of questions that had to be answered before creating an agency, and through the encouragement to answer those difficult questions, to create such a sending agency.

The Methodology

The question of what it would require to enable Honduran Baptists to create an indigenous sending agency motivated the research for this thesis. A constructive, or entrepreneurial, methodology was chosen that would lead to the creation of a sending agency. There was a unique aspect to this methodology: I would not be a part of the creation of the entity I was proposing. Another aspect of this methodology that is unusual is that whereby the entrepreneur is in a position to make changes during the creation process to strategies that are determined to be inappropriate, I would not be able to influence the process at all once it began. My role was simply that of initial catalyst, encourager, and final observer. The initial thrust of momentum would come from my efforts, but the continuation of that momentum would be sustained by the efforts of the Honduran Baptists.

That there was a desire on the part of some Honduran Baptists to have a sending agency was obvious from conversations with some of them. The desire to make all the difficult decisions and do all the necessary labor to realize such a sending agency was not as obvious. It would have been much easier for them to

simply copy what they had seen done by those who had brought the gospel to them, and to try to make that model fit their circumstances.

The first step in the process was to present a biblical basis for the creation of a sending agency. This is important to Baptists because of their belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible and its authority for the Church. If Baptists cannot be convinced that something is biblical, they are probably not going to be interested in participating in it. For the Honduran Baptists, this is especially true.

The next step was to decide how to go about helping the Honduran Baptists create an indigenous sending agency. I ended up approaching it in an entrepreneurial fashion, much as person who wanted to start a business would approach that task. I first asked the question “Is there a need?”

By investigating the existing sending agencies in Honduras, I discovered that there were no satisfactory alternatives. A friend had suggested that the need could be determined by the amount of “pressure” created by those who wanted to be sent out, but who did not have a proper vehicle for being sent. After having spoken with several pastors who had individuals in their churches who felt called to cross-cultural missions, it became evident that even as early as 2003 there was an obvious pressure building to send missionaries.

In addition to the need to have an agency that could send out missionaries, there was the desire to have an agency that could promote missions and cause even more interest in missions. The momentum needed to get Honduran Baptist missionaries on the field would be enhanced by having an agency that could point to existing missionaries and their successes.

Once it was clear that there was a need, the next question became “What will it take to create such an agency?” I began by trying to cast a vision for the Hondurans of the possibility of them creating an indigenous agency. Then I attempted to involve them in the process by asking the questions that are found in the manual. These questions were intended to initiate the process by which the Hondurans would address the complex issues related to the creation of the agency. I hoped the momentum created by these actions would sustain the creation process that would involve periodical meetings of a core group of people who were motivated to create the agency and who would ensure the realization of this project. Chapter five describes the results of these efforts.⁵

Goals of This Thesis

My intention was to act catalytically in creating and combining the right ingredients that would result in the creation of a sending agency by and for Honduran Baptists. Each of the four goals is one of those ingredients and has contributed to the progress being made in creating the sending agency.

Motivate Leaders to Begin the Process

The first goal of this thesis was to motivate the Honduran Baptist leaders to begin the process of forming a missionary sending agency. For some time they have been discussing the need for such an agency, but had not made any significant progress toward that end. In January 2002 a committee was formed to look at the possibility of creating a sending agency, but the committee only met once and was

⁵ See Appendix B for the answers the Hondurans gave to the manual questions.

unable to reach any agreement as to what should be done next. A member of that committee told me that part of the problem was that several of those who were appointed to the committee really had no knowledge of missions and were not motivated to create a sending agency.

As a catalyst, I first brought together those who have a heart for missions and whose opinions and wisdom would be acknowledged by the Honduran Baptist Convention. By asking pastors who were familiar with most of the pastors in the Baptist convention who among their peers had a heart for missions, I compiled a list of men's names that were given repeatedly. This core group is more motivated to actually form a sending agency than was the committee that was created by the Honduras Baptist Convention.

This first goal has been achieved. A group of six Baptist pastors with varying experience in missions began in 2003 to look at the issue of what it would entail to create a sending organization. They met on numerous occasions to begin to work their way through the questions that I posed about what type of mission sending agency Honduran Baptists need and how that agency would function.

What Kind of Agency to Create

The second goal of this thesis is to provide a starting point for the Honduran Baptist Convention in the consideration of what kind of agency they should have. This was accomplished through the creation of a list of questions that the convention leaders considered in order to arrive at good decisions. There may be a strong tendency for them to want to imitate what they have seen in another missionary

sending agency without really considering how well that structure would work within Baptist polity and the cultural realities at work in the Honduran Baptist churches and convention. These leaders are addressing many of the issues inherent in organizing a sending agency. They are thinking through and debating the various advantages and disadvantages of the different avenues available to them, and then they will make a proposal to the national convention that such an agency be created and the policies implemented.

This manual ended up being the key element in the development of a sending agency. It was the one thing that brought a quick and concrete response from those who were exposed to it. Instead of simply telling them what they needed to do, it showed them how to go about finding the answers they would need.

The Urgency of Starting Now

The third goal is to impress upon the convention leaders the urgency of beginning these efforts to create an agency. Since the creation of the agency itself is likely to take anywhere from one to three years, the initial groundwork must begin sooner rather than later. To a great extent the rapidity of the creation of this sending agency will depend on the work done by the six leaders in preparation for making the proposal to the national convention. There was a desire on my part that this groundwork be expedited to the point where the proposal would be ready to be presented at the 2004 annual meeting, but that did not occur. It was not until the 2006 annual meeting that the Honduras Baptist Convention approved the creation of the sending agency.

Whereas those who worked with the manual have been enthusiastic about the creation of a sending agency, that enthusiasm does not appear to have spread quickly throughout the churches that form the convention. Unless that ingredient of urgency is added to the mix, I fear that the sending agency will be viewed by many as a project of the six pastors and leaders and will not be recognized as a tool for all the churches to utilize.

An Indigenous Agency

A fourth, and final, goal is for this sending agency to be indigenous and for my role to simply be that of a catalyst in this process. It was my intention to remain at the fringes of the initial discovery process in order to clarify any points of confusion in the manual of questions I gave them. Once they began to deliberate, I was not a part of the deliberation process. If this agency is to be indigenous, it will need for them to create it without anyone from the outside making “corrections” or even suggestions. Part of the learning process is bound to be through the process of trial and error. They will make adjustments to the agency over the years as they detect weaknesses and obsolete policies.

Because the agency is being created by Hondurans who have analyzed the issues and who have made decisions based on their understanding of biblical principles and the Honduran Baptist cultural realities, I believe that this fourth goal has also been achieved.

The Written Thesis

An overview of the history of Baptists in Honduras and of the realities in which they live and work is included in chapter one. This chapter includes a brief analysis of existing models of sending agencies and existing financial models. It concludes with a presentation of the process needed to realize the creation of the sending agency.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part of this thesis is proving to be the development of a theological framework for the creation of a sending agency. This framework, which is set out in chapter two, takes a look at the biblical basis for global missions and the role an agency, or para-church organization, can play in sending missionaries across cultural barriers. Since I am now working as a missions mobilizer in Panama, this theological framework is proving to be a valuable resource in vision casting and strategizing with the Panamanian Baptists.

Chapter three is a review of the literature related to the creation of a sending agency as well as materials that deal with the issues that are addressed by those who desire to create a sending agency. Some documents from existing mission agencies will also be examined.

The fourth chapter presents the questions the Honduran Baptists leaders were given at the outset of this thesis work and which they must address in their creation of a sending agency. These are divided into various headings that deal with questions related to the structure of the agency and its policies regarding different aspects of the agency's operations.

The Conclusion of the thesis will describe how far the Honduran Baptists leaders have gotten in their efforts at the time of publication of this thesis and a prognosis of their efforts. It will also address how this experience has affected how I will work with the Panamanians as they, too, deal with the issues related to sending missionaries.

A History of the Southern Baptist Work in Honduras

Southern Baptists first made their presence felt in Honduras in the mid 1940s when missionaries who were living in neighboring countries made short-term trips to southern Honduras. These missionaries had been contacted by several “independent” churches that had withdrawn from the Central American Church (Iglesia Evangélica Centroamericana) and had been using literature produced by the Baptist Spanish Publishing House of the Southern Baptist Convention. Upon the arrival of the missionaries in 1946 and the subsequent discussions between these two groups, the existing churches found themselves in agreement with Baptist doctrine.⁶

Between 1946 and 1954 Hondurans planted several Baptist churches in the southern and central parts of the country⁷. The first two missionary families assigned to Honduras arrived in 1954. Both families began their efforts in the capital, Tegucigalpa. The Baptist Convention of Honduras (CONIBAH as it is known by its Spanish acronym) was founded in Siguatepeque in early 1958 with four constituted churches and 22 missions, and had its first convention in November

⁶ Marlo López, *Historia y Misión del Protestantismo Hondureño* (San José, Costa Rica: Visión Mundial, 1993), 93

⁷ Ibid., 97.

of the same year.⁸ A theological institute was begun in 1958 with two students and was incorporated into the Baptist Convention of Honduras in 1977.⁹

More missionary families began to arrive and by the end of 1983 there were 40 missionaries: 16 couples, 3 single women, and 5 short-term volunteers¹⁰. At that time there were approximately 40 churches in the convention. An emphasis on church planting led to the founding of many new congregations over the next few years. In 1980 the Mexican Baptist Convention sent their first missionary couple to Honduras.¹¹ In 1989 a second couple was sent by the Mexican convention to work in the Olancho department in northeast Honduras, and shortly thereafter a third Mexican couple arrived to work as church planters.¹²

In January 1993 the Honduran Baptist Convention named Jacobo Ríos and his wife as the first Honduran Baptist home missionaries sent out by the convention.¹³ They were sent to work as church planters in the western part of Honduras, which until that time had not had any exposure to Evangelical doctrine except for an occasional Pentecostal house church. The Ríos were able to plant nine churches and begin an association of Baptist churches during their seven years spent there.¹⁴

However, this is not seen by the Honduran Baptists as a success story because of a moral failure on the part of the missionary. Generally, this is

⁸ Ibid., 103-105.

⁹ Ibid., 105, 116, 117.

¹⁰ Steve Baillio, "Historical Background" (Intra-mission document, 1984, photocopied), 16 (section II).

¹¹ López, 118.

¹² Ibid., n, 91.

¹³ Stanley D. Stamps, "Baptists in Honduras" (Honduras Baptist Mission, photocopy), 2.

¹⁴ Jacobo Ríos, letter to author, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, August 2003.

considered by the Hondurans to have been a failure because there was a lack of oversight built into the sending process, and there was no accountability. By the time the moral failure was discovered, there had been considerable damage done to the outreach efforts of the churches he had planted.

Over a period of years the Honduran Baptists began to feel patronized by the North American missionaries. They began to ask for more autonomy in the administration of the convention's institutions. In 1970 the Honduran Baptist Convention leadership began negotiations with the Honduras Baptist Mission regarding the gradual transferal to the convention of the Baptist Bookstore, the Baptist seminary, and the Baptist camp at Lake Yojoa.¹⁵ The transfer was completed in the 1990s and now all three entities belong to the Honduras Baptist Convention.

After Hurricane Mitch ravaged Honduras in October 1998 many new churches were planted as a result of the relief efforts of Hondurans and North American volunteers who helped to rebuild many of the houses that had been destroyed. While nearly all the funds for the reconstruction came from the Baptist Mission, both Hondurans and North American missionaries coordinated the effort in cooperation with one another. The Hondurans, through their Emergency Committee, decided where the houses would be built and how many would be built. The missionaries (including myself) coordinated the logistics involved in bringing approximately 1,800 volunteers to Honduras for Disaster Relief ministries. The

¹⁵ López, 120.

Honduran Baptist churches were the driving force behind the church planting efforts that were undertaken in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch.

First for four months in 2000, then for three years beginning in 2001 my family served in Honduras as part of the hurricane relief efforts. It was through these firsthand experiences with the local churches that I was able to rejoice in seeing Honduran Baptists mobilize to start new churches in communities that had previously been unreached by them and other Evangelical groups.

The Current Status of the Southern Baptist Work in Honduras

The International Mission Board (IMB) now considers Honduras to be transitioning to a “Maturing Field” status. That means that there are enough Evangelicals as a percentage of the population to begin expecting the national leadership to take responsibility for nearly all aspects of the Baptist work in Honduras. It also means that the IMB will not place missionaries in Honduras any longer except to work with ethno-linguistic groups or for specific strategy reasons. As some begin to retire and others transfer to other fields, Honduras will be left with only a skeleton crew of missionaries. Those who stay will have responsibilities in the areas of theological education and the mobilization of nationals to missions.

This concept of maturing fields is new for our mission board. Never before has the IMB viewed a nation as being mature enough to merit the reassignment of missionaries to other, more pioneer areas. This new concept is part of the restructuring of the IMB that began in 1997 to focus on the greatest areas of “lostness” in the world. This new emphasis began as “New Directions,” and is now

called “Strategic Directions.” It has flourished under the capable leadership of Dr. Jerry Rankin, president of the IMB, and has resulted in record numbers of missionary appointments and record levels of financial support for international missions.

The author of this thesis has been invited to participate in this historic paradigm shift as the leader of a team that will work in one of the newly designated maturing fields (Panama). The first five countries that will be labeled as maturing fields are El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. There are parts of Mexico that also may soon be designated as maturing fields.

As of January 2003 there were 197 Baptist churches affiliated with the Honduras Baptist Convention. In addition, there are 223 missions and preaching points.¹⁶ The theological education system has undergone a major renovation and now has 182 people registered in its three levels of classes.¹⁷ There were, as of the end of 2005, 14 missionaries (seven couples) living and working in Honduras. One other couple lives in Nicaragua and works with an indigenous group that straddles the Honduran/Nicaraguan border.

Honduran Baptists and Missions

For the most part, Honduran Baptists have considered themselves a mission field. Church planting has been done typically by starting a new work in a neighboring *colonia* or in a nearby town. There has not been much of an emphasis

¹⁶ Marina Menzies, “Statistical Report made to Honduras Baptist Convention” (presented to the Honduras Baptist Convention, Lake Yojoa, Honduras, January 2003, photocopied), 1.

¹⁷ Oscar Ríos, interview by author, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, September 1 2003.

on the Baptists having “home missionaries.” At the time this thesis project was begun, there was no agency or even committee within the convention that was responsible for the sending of missionaries, whether locally or internationally.

As the number of International Mission Board missionaries in Honduras has declined over the years, many Honduran Baptist leaders have felt a sense of betrayal by the mission board. They had believed that there would always be a strong missionary presence that they could depend upon for assistance and support. Perhaps to some extent this attitude was encouraged by the missionaries who thought that Honduras would always be a mission field that would have to depend upon outside assistance of various kinds. In fact, one Honduran Baptist wrote that “the orthodoxy and praxis of the missionary task has been characterized until now in limiting itself to only receiving missionaries. That is to say, Honduras has seen itself only as a mission field and not as a mission force with worldwide responsibility.”¹⁸

Some Honduran Baptists are not sure if they are ready to administer their own affairs, much less become a mature convention that sends missionaries to other countries and cultures. In some respects, they are similar to a young adult who is not sure he wants to take complete responsibility for his life after having had the moral and financial support of his parent for so many years. While several pastors have expressed to me their philosophical agreement with the strategic deployment of North American missionaries, they still have a strong visceral sense of dependency upon someone else who will make the difficult decisions for them.

¹⁸ López, 189 (My translation).

However, there are a few Hondurans who feel up to the challenge of sending missionaries. A former rector of the seminary, Marlo López, expressed that same hope in 1993 when he wrote, “Another important aspect of this period is the elaboration of a project of national and international missionaries in which the convention plans to send and sustain Honduran missionaries in the least evangelized areas of the country. With this plan a new phase dawns in the evangelizing mission of the Baptist churches of CONIBAH, in that they do not just contemplate the national field, but also the entire world as their mission field.”¹⁹

In fact, the creation of a sending agency by Honduran Baptists is the next step in their maturation process as a national church body. Just as the human body passes through various phases on its way to maturity, an organization, including a group of churches, must also pass through various phases on its way to maturity. A Honduran Baptist church that is not yet active in global missions is an immature church. As a body of churches the Honduras Baptist Convention needs to move into that phase of maturity where its missions emphasis reflects its nearly 60 years of existence.

Indeed, Ralph D. Winter²⁰ would argue that from the beginning Southern Baptist missionaries should have been sowing the seeds for the creation of a sending agency (sodality) instead of simply planting churches (modalities). If this had been done, there is no telling what level of maturity the Honduran Baptists would now be

¹⁹ López, 120, 121 (My translation).

²⁰ Ralph D. Winter, “The Two Structures of God’s Redemptive Mission,” *Missiology* 2:1 (January 1974): 14.

experiencing, especially if they had created an indigenous sending agency.²¹ If the missionaries had done such “sodality sowing” earlier, perhaps there would have been a more fruitful atmosphere of cooperation with sodalities.

The general concern among Honduran (and Panamanian) Baptists has been expressed as “How can a [sodality] benefit me?” There is a belief that sodalities tend to siphon away the best and brightest from the churches. Because of this, there is a tendency (for pastors especially) to see sodalities as competitors. This may have been different if the sodalities had been created in the early stages alongside the modalities.

The Challenge Before Us

It is exciting to attempt to initiate a Great Commission and Acts 1:8 movement among the Honduran Baptist churches. The magnitude of the challenge becomes clear as we examine some of the obstacles to sending missionaries as well as answering questions related to the need for a Honduran Baptist missionary sending agency.

Seven Obstacles to Sending Missionaries

I have identified seven obstacles the Honduran Baptists need to overcome in order to create such a sending agency. While these obstacles are numerous and

²¹ The Middle America and Caribbean Region Mobilization Associate, Lloyd Mann, tells of two Latin American Baptist conventions that began at about the same time, but that have had completely opposite involvement in cross-cultural missions. He says that the convention that included global missions in its constitution currently has about 300 cross-cultural missionaries, but that the convention that stated that its purpose was to win that country to Christ has only one cross-cultural missionary as of early 2005.

great, they are not absolute impediments to the creation of a sending agency. In fact, they serve as a challenge for growth for Honduran Baptists.

The first obstacle is related to infrastructure. As North Americans, we are prone to forget that not every country enjoys the banking system that has been developed over the years in the United States. In many countries technology has not advanced past where technology was in the 1970s in the United States and Canada. For a local church to be able to arrange and maintain a flow of funds from one third-world country into another requires a tremendous amount of effort, much of which may be beyond the abilities of those in the local church. Likewise, the country where the missionary is to reside may have an underdeveloped banking system that complicates the efficient transfer of funds to the field of service.

Add to this obstacle the interference in some cultures by the government in the transfer of funds from outside that country and restrictions on how much foreign currency can be held at any time and one can see the difficulties a local church might have in maintaining its missionary on the field. Larry D. Pate points out correctly that “the conditions of today’s world make the formation of missionary agencies at the local church level harder and harder.”²²

A local church may also lack the administrative acumen to be able to address many of the issues that must be determined before an individual or family can leave their home country and move to another part of the world. There are both practical and philosophical decisions that have to be made in order to avoid the dilemma of having to make those decisions when the missionaries are on the field and needing

²² Larry D. Pate, *Misionología: Nuestro Cometido Transcultural*, trans. Esteban A. Marosi and Wilfredo Calderón (Deerfield, FL: Editorial VIDA, 1987), 373.

an immediate answer. This agency will be able to overcome this second obstacle in order to facilitate the sending and care of missionaries without replacing the local church as the biblical force for missions mobilization.

It must be recognized that within Honduran cultural realities there are situations that mitigate against the creation of an indigenous sending agency. One of these realities is the dependency that has been created over the years in both Honduran society in general, and also in the Evangelical churches. Some have proposed that the conquest and colonization by Spain of the Latin American countries created an atmosphere of dependency upon the rich outsiders for all things.²³ The fact that the Evangelical churches came to Honduras with the attitude that they would have to provide tremendous financial resources for such a poor country only added to the underlying dependency within the culture. In other words, the Evangelical missionaries helped create this third obstacle.

For many Hondurans, the first step in making a decision is to see what those who provide the financing have to say. The basic assumption that someone else is going to have to provide the financing is the first clue to dependency. It is one thing for financial assistance to be sought when other resources have proven to be unavailable, but it is another thing for the first step to be the seeking of finances from outside the country.

A fourth obstacle is the lack of vision among Honduran Baptists. Many Honduran Baptists may not even be aware of the need to send missionaries from Honduras to other parts of the world. Many Baptist churches in Honduras do not

²³ Guillermo Yeatts, *Raíces de Pobreza: Las Perversas Reglas de Juego en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Abeledo-Perrot, 2000).

have any kind of missions committee or anyone in charge of promoting missions. This deficiency is bound to have long-term effects upon Honduran Baptist missionary endeavors. At the last four annual Baptist conventions there have been presentations made about cross-cultural missions and the opportunities that exist for sending missionaries. In January 2002 a committee was formed to investigate the possibility of forming a sending agency. That committee met once and was unable to set a course of action for itself.²⁴

This lack of vision extends to many of the pastors. The perception that Honduras is a “receiving” country and not a “sending” country encourages the pastors to understand Acts 1:8 in a sequential manner: you will be my witnesses first in Jerusalem, then in all Judea, then to Samaria, etc. While I never heard a Honduran Baptist pastor say that, Honduran Baptist pastors have told me that they know pastors who believe in the sequential interpretation of Acts 1:8. This interpretation allows them to feel that the time is not right to send out missionaries because we have not yet finished the work here.

Perhaps an anecdotal example will illustrate this lack of vision. A young woman who grew up with my wife in a Honduran Baptist church began to feel God calling her to missions many years ago. She repeatedly asked her pastor for permission to attend training events and to participate in mission trips outside of Honduras. He refused to give that permission for a number of years. Finally, she left the Baptist church of her youth and began attending a church (Iglesia Gran Comisión) that gave her the freedom and opportunity to receive missions training

²⁴ A member of that committee (César Peña) described that meeting to me. He is one of the six who worked on the creation of this sending agency.

and to serve outside of Honduras. We have participated financially in supporting her work, but would have loved for her to have represented the Light and Truth Baptist Church of Tegucigalpa in that work.

The issue of trust is of major importance when dealing with finances. Not only does the missionary family need to know that those who are handling their finances are trustworthy, so do the churches and individuals who financially contribute to the sending of the missionaries. Here it is wise to recognize all areas in which a breakdown of trust can jeopardize the ministry of the missionaries. Too often Christians avoid talking about finances and related issues in order to avoid both conflict and the reality that people do not always act in a Christ-like way when they have access to significant amounts of money. This fifth obstacle to the creation of a sending agency has thwarted other attempts to create sending agencies in other Latin American countries.²⁵

The Honduran Baptists have also been hampered by a sense of distrust of organizations that are not identified as being “Baptist.” Unfortunately, this sense of distrust is evident from the lowest levels of Baptist life (the local church), all the way to the highest levels of the Honduras Baptist Convention. This sixth obstacle has prevented them from utilizing other sending agencies until they are able to create their own agency. It will also make it more difficult for missionaries to work with teams from other denominations on the mission field.

²⁵ The Middle America and Caribbean Region mobilization Associate, Lloyd Mann, tells of two Latin American Baptist conventions that mishandled funds designated for missionary support to the point that the local churches refused to send missionary support funds through the conventions.

One area in which Baptists are weak is that of educating the members of the local churches as to how Baptists relate to one another as well as how to relate to other Christians. There is a strong current of independence among the pastors and leaders of the Honduran Baptist churches. Some Baptist pastors have come from non-Baptist backgrounds or have received their training from non-Baptists and do not appreciate the strong sense of cooperation that is a hallmark of Baptists, especially of Southern Baptists. This seventh obstacle to sending missionaries is a major one.

These obstacles must be thoroughly addressed, if not entirely overcome, by Honduran Baptists in order to create a functioning sending agency. Left unaddressed, these obstacles will either individually, or in various combinations, cause the sending agency to fail within a very short time. It is possible that the agency would fail to send even one missionary because they did not properly address these obstacles.

The Need for a Sending Agency

Perhaps it would be beneficial to ask the question “Is there a need for Honduran Baptists to create a sending agency?” There are actually two aspects of this question that must be answered before we can proceed. The first aspect of the question is “Why create a sending agency?” As will be seen in the next chapter (Theological Framework), there is an underlying assumption to this thesis that the local church should be the entity that “sends” missionaries. If this is the case, why create a “para-church” agency?

It is my desire to assist the Honduran Baptist churches to create an agency that appreciates the preeminent role of the local church in the sending of missionaries. In so doing, they will want to assist the local churches in the development of internal functions that will aid in the process of sending and maintaining missionaries. This will be discussed in a later chapter when we look at the questions those creating the agency will need to answer in the process of creating the agency.

There is a strong trend in Latin America toward this church based focus. The mission organization COMIBAM has stipulated the importance of the local church for the sending of missionaries in this way:

In Latin America it is curious that church based movements are advancing. We thank God for this, for one basic reason: among us there are not economic surpluses that the churches can use for the formation of missionary societies. So the same economic circumstance is forcing us to think “correctly according to the Bible” that the local church is who should recruit, disciple, and send the missionaries. And the mission agencies are an element that grows out of the history of the church to aid the church in the correct sending of missionaries. In the days of Paul it can hardly be said that there existed any institution, except that he formed his own team, which, according to Ralph Winter, was the first mission agency model.²⁶

Part of the answer to the question of why create a para-church organization can be found in another statement by COMIBAM. The following observations are made in respect to what they have seen occur throughout Latin America:

The church begins to send missionaries and to commit errors because in the process it has forgotten that it needs the help of an intermediate element, one called a mission agency or mission society, that can counsel it in specialized points that [the local church] neither knows well or has the potential to know well.

²⁶ Federico A. Bertuzzi, ed., *La Iglesia Latina en Misión Mundial* (Santa Fe, Argentina: COMIBAM,, 1997), 18 (My translation).

The reality is that the churches do not trust what they think a mission agency is, that in many cases has appeared to be an entity that comes and robs their young people to take them as adventurers to the mission field. Neither do they desire to invest money in something that they consider unnecessary and that siphons funds that the missionary could use. In a word, they are not willing to spend resources on agencies and mission movements, since they think that these people just go from one meeting to another, one trip to another, but do little to send missionaries to the field.

I believe that the farther the church gets from Jerusalem, the more necessary becomes the participation of specialized missionary sending structures, that is to say, agencies or missionary societies. When the church tries to do it alone, without the collaboration of the agency, the one who suffers most directly is the missionary. The lack of control in the financial support, the absence of adequate channels of communication between the missionary and the church, and vice-versa, the lack of adequate pastoral care of the missionary in the field (which requires financial resources), are direct causes of why many workers return home before the desired and expected time.²⁷

Neal Pirolo offers six areas in which an agency is able to assist the local church. These are moral support, organizational support, economical support, prayer support, communication support, and reintegration support for the returning missionary.²⁸ While some local churches may be able to perform some of these roles, the agency is designed to greatly enhance the church's mission efforts. For those very small churches, the agency might be the difference between success and failure in the sending of missionaries.

Pirolo's six areas show that there needs to be a strong relationship between the local church and the sending agency. In fact, "there should be a very careful cooperation between the church and the agency."²⁹ Ralph D. Winter goes even further in stating that the ideal situation would reflect that of the apostle Paul where

²⁷ Ibid., 23 (My translation).

²⁸ Neal Pirolo, *Sirviendo al enviar obreros* (San Diego: Emmaus Road International, 1991).

²⁹ Denis Lane, *Administración Eficaz de Una Agencia de Envío*, trans. Fanny Chanto Alajuela (Santa Fe, Argentina: COMIBAM, 2003), 29 (My translation).

“his missionary band specifically nourished the congregations – a most significant symbiosis.”³⁰

Any missionary whose financial support would not be provided by one congregation (and perhaps even some who do receive their support from one church) would be able to take advantage of a sending agency that was well prepared to deal with the financial issues involved in the sending of a missionary. Of course, other functions of the sending agency would also benefit both the missionary and the sending church or churches.

Another factor in this issue is the opportunity for the sending agency to enable Baptists to better cover their national territory, as well as to send missionaries overseas. In fact, it has become very clear in the initial stages of this thesis that there is a tremendous need in the local churches for training in the area of missions committees. I have been asked to present several workshops on the work of the local church missions committee since October 2003. It has been suggested that we make an effort to extend this training nationally so that the local church can have a fuller understanding of the role of a missions committee. Appendix B is an outline of the workshop that I presented to Baptist churches in Honduras and that is now being presented in Panama.

The first role of the missions committee is to educate the congregation about the possibilities for that particular congregation in the area of missions. This will include the teaching of biblical principles and current Missiology. The missions committee will also provide training opportunities for those who will be participating in one way or another in the mission activity. One important role for

³⁰ Winter, 7.

the missions committee will be the training of the missions committees of any churches that are begun by the sponsoring church.

The second role of the missions committee is to inform the congregation of the progress of the church's mission activities. This will include the progress, struggles, and victories of the missionaries, their personal well being, and the future plans for mission activities. A missions committee may even make recommendations to the church regarding future opportunities, both short-term and long-term.

A missions committee is also in the unique position to encourage the congregation in its financial stewardship. As the committee informs and educates, it will also make clear that what is being done carries a financial cost. In encouraging the congregation to continue its mission efforts, the committee will also encourage financial support for missions activities.

Clearly, Honduran Baptists are not going to be fully active in missions if they do not form their own missionary sending agency. A handful of churches may attempt to send out missionaries, but most Honduran Baptist churches will discover the obstacles to doing so are very difficult to overcome by a local church. The degree to which the Honduran Baptists are able to work successfully with other agencies will remain to be seen.

The second part of the initial question about the need for Honduran Baptists to create a sending agency is related to the issue of whether or not Baptists need their own agency, or if they can utilize existing agencies.

Existing Models for Sending Agencies

It is a fundamental missiological principle that the agency that serves the local church and the missionary family must be an agency that reflects the culture of those who send as well as those who are sent. While there may be outside assistance in the formation of the agency, its mission and vision statements, its structure, and its personnel should all be from the culture that is sending and being sent. This particular sending agency is envisioned to be created by Hondurans, run by Hondurans, and owned (emotionally) by Hondurans. These Hondurans may look at various types of sending agencies, but they should create this agency with the intention of having it reflect their cultural values and interests. Without this indigenous composition the decision-making process will be hampered by having to attempt to formulate those decisions based on the cultural values of others. That is a shortcut to failure; the agency will not thrive if it tries to operate in a fashion that is alien to its own cultural values.

Federico Bertuzzi says that “It is foreseeable that in the future the number and forms of agencies or missionary structures will increase, and that is desirable, that those that begin to appear do it according to models that are appropriate to our Latin-American context.”³¹ It is imperative that both the initial agency and its future manifestations be thoroughly indigenous and without extra-cultural characteristics.

The Latin American mission organization COMIBAM in its 2002 catalog of Latin American mission agencies lists 13 such agencies in Honduras. Most of these agencies are more mission societies that encourage missions, than actually sending

³¹ Federico A. Bertuzzi, *El Despertar de las Misiones* (Miami: Editorial Unilit, 1997), 71.

agencies. Several of these agencies send missionaries exclusively from their denomination.³² Several of these are minimally acting as sending agencies by only sending two or three missionaries at present. The only agency that acts as a multi-denominational sender is presently transitioning from being a sending agency to being a missionary movement that promotes all aspects of the mobilization of Latin Americans to cross-cultural missions. It has only sent one couple as missionaries (to a predominantly Muslim country in West Africa) in its 11-year history and does not anticipate sending any more missionaries.

Juventud Con Una Misión (JUCUM, known as YWAM in English) has two training tracks for those interested in missions. The first track is the Discipleship Training Series (DTS), which focuses on the character and spiritual life of the individual. The second track is the School of Frontier Missions, which teaches more Missiology and prepares the student for cross-cultural missions. The School of Frontier Missions in Honduras is currently the only such school in Central America. JUCUM does not “send” missionaries, but they are attempting to help the local churches in Honduras to “place” cross-cultural missionaries with other mission organizations.

Juventud Con Una Misión has struggled over the years with the reputation among pastors of being “sheep stealers.” Leaders of JUCUM often attempt to dispel this image, and emphasize their work with the local churches. The Honduran Baptist pastors I have talked with about JUCUM have not expressed a reluctance to send their young people to do missions through that agency, but they have noticeably avoided doing so.

³² From investigation by author.

At present there is no local sending agency that Honduran Baptists can feel comfortable with using. They have experimented with international sending agencies for short-term projects on several occasions. While they have not had any major conflicts, there has not been a sense of having fully shared in the entire process. They also have felt as though the short-term nature of these projects and the lack of an ongoing financial obligation have precluded them from having a full partnership in the sending process.

The Need for the Sending Agency to be Indigenous

The Honduran Baptists need a sending agency that reflects their own culture. There is always a tendency to look somewhere else for a successful model to emulate. Often, because of the history of North American missionaries having taken the gospel to a particular field, the mission agency that sent those missionaries is deemed worthy of imitation by the national church. While there may be facets of that agency that can be emulated, the reality that such an agency was created in an entirely different cultural milieu must be taken into account.

Other Latin American sending agencies may also be contemplated by the Hondurans as successful models to investigate. During the process of this thesis project, I made available to the working group a series of documents from various Latin American sending agencies in order to give the working group an idea of what other groups had done. The fact that these documents were all in Spanish also aided them in their research. While each agency will reflect the particular culture and time

in which it was created, there will be natural affinities with the indigenous sending agency that the Honduran Baptists will eventually create.

In writing about the indigenous church, Melvin L. Hodges says “Anything which hinders the development of the Church, no matter how much immediate good it does, should be sacrificed for the slower but more permanent good achieved through the establishment of the indigenous church.”³³ I would take that one step further. While it may be expedient to create *some kind* of sending agency in order to quickly get Honduran Baptists on the field, I believe it is far better to create an indigenous sending agency, even if that means having to wait a while longer to get missionaries on the field. I believe they will be able to stay longer and bear more fruit if they come from an indigenous sending agency rather than doing what someone else is doing.

There are three dangers I see associated with creating a non-indigenous sending agency. The first danger is that there will not be a full ownership of the sending agency by the Honduran Baptists. That is, while it may carry the name of the Honduran Baptists, if it does not reflect who they are, they are more likely to see it as something imported from somewhere else, something foreign. It could be compared to David trying to wear Saul’s armor; it just does not fit. Something that is often overlooked in looking at other models is that they are not now what they were when they were first created. It is nearly impossible to create something that looks like a 100 year old organization. If that model is to be imitated, it should be

³³ Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), 110.

imitated as it was when it was created, not what it has become over many years of learning and adjustments.

The second danger is that the decision-making mechanisms may not be congruent with the culture. If the Hondurans make decisions in an unnatural way, then there will be numerous problems with either the implementation of those decisions or with the consequences of the decisions. This is one area where North Americans with their strong emphasis on democracy can derail an indigenous sodality whose culture does not place nearly as much emphasis on democratic principles as do the missionaries who are encouraging the nationals to create a sending agency.

A third danger in not being indigenous is when the missionaries who influenced the creation process leave, their opinions and ideas are still considered by the nationals to be normative. Just as there are many church members buried in the cemetery outside the church building in the United States who still influence every decision that is made inside the building, so it is many times on the mission field: even though the missionary or donor has left, decisions are made based on pleasing him.

It has been my goal to avoid these dangers by not getting too involved in the actual decision-making process. I have tried to act as a catalyst in the process without affecting the actual outcome. It has been difficult to do so for two reasons. First, it would have been much easier and faster to go in and try to direct the process with suggestions and timelines. Second, it would have made the entire thesis project much easier than it has turned out to be.

There are certain areas of the sending agency that most lend themselves to the principle of indigeneity in the creation process. The first area is that of mission and vision. Unless the areas of mission and vision are determined by Honduran Baptists and for Honduran Baptists, there is much less likelihood of the agency being successful in the long term. The Honduran Baptist churches must “buy into” the purposes of the sending agency as they are described in the mission and vision statements. If the churches do not buy into these statements, they will not avail themselves of the opportunities that the sending agency provides for coordinated mission efforts.

The second area is related to the structure of the sending agency. Again, it is easy for them to look at a fully mature sending agency and want to imitate that agency. The more difficult thing will be to create an agency that is flexible enough to grow and to make adjustments without causing undue stress for either the sending churches or the missionaries.

The third area is that of funding. This will be dealt with later in both this chapter and the next chapter (Theological Framework). Suffice it to say that if the model chosen does not reflect Honduran realities, there will be innumerable difficulties in funding missions and in convincing sending churches to utilize the sending agency.

The fourth, and last, area is that of policies. The questions given to the Hondurans in the manual were intended to stimulate their thinking so that they could make culturally appropriate policies for the sending agency. There is no doubt that if policies were to be made on the basis of what some other group does, those

policies would in many cases end up inhibiting the work of the sending agency. By making policies that reflect the cultural realities of Honduran Baptists, the sending agency will have a much greater chance of survival and success.

The importance of the indigeneity of the Honduran Baptist sending agency cannot be stressed enough. The probability of the Honduran Baptist missionaries bearing much fruit and doing so for a long time is greater if the sending agency is indigenous to the sending culture.

The Ability of Honduran Baptist Churches to Send Missionaries

Long before a national convention of churches reaches the stage whereby they are classified as a “Maturing Field,” they should be taking the lead in sending national missionaries out from the churches. In many cases this will simply mean sending them from one part of the country to another. In others, however, it will mean sending nationals across international borders. In either case, it is wise for the national convention to have policies and an organizational structure in place that both encourage and facilitate the sending of these missionaries. There are numerous reasons for this, as we shall see.

The formation by the national convention of a missionary sending agency that promotes the mobilization of nationals and facilitates their sending is a tremendous step in the maturation process of that convention. It will provide the momentum to fulfill the Great Commission and Jesus’ command in Acts 1:8 that has been lacking to date in the life of the Honduran Baptist churches. Federico Bertuzzi

says that there are three steps in the development of mission activity.³⁴ He calls these steps 1.) missionary awareness (*concientización*), 2.) missionary preparation (*capacitación*), and 3.) the channeling (*canalización*) of human resources and materials to the mission field. Among Honduran Baptists, step one is now underway while steps two and three are not quite ready to take place.

The mobilization of nationals ranges from the sending of “missionaries” from one neighborhood to another in order to start a church, all the way to sending cross-cultural missionaries to other areas of the world. Within this wide range fall other types of similar-culture and cross-cultural missionaries. These are the missionaries who would be most affected by the creation of an indigenous sending agency. Even those who are sent from one part of Honduras to another part would benefit from the organizational oversight of such an agency.

Larry D. Pate refers to such agencies as “Daughter Missionary Agencies” (*Agencias Misioneras Hijas*) that are “established by the receiving churches to send cross-cultural evangelists.”³⁵ This is considered a natural growth process of the national church and is highly desired for its continued maturity. Ralph D. Winter concurs when he encourages the formation of sodalities in addition to modalities in the receiving churches.³⁶

³⁴ Bertuzzi, *El Despertar de las Misiones*, 76.

³⁵ Pate, 371.

³⁶ Winter, 14.

The Impetus for an Agency

To date, nearly all “home missionaries” (pastors sent out to start churches) have remained in the general geographical area in which the sending church is located. This has allowed for easier oversight and participation by the sending church. There has recently, however, been an interest expressed by Honduran leaders to reach those in the most isolated areas of the country. This would entail the kind of organization that many churches do not presently possess.

Interest in the possibility of sending missionaries to other parts of the world among Honduran Baptists is in its nascent stage. Several individuals have expressed a sense of call to cross-cultural missions, but have to a great extent been frustrated in their efforts to find a way to achieve the fulfillment of that call. Their churches are small and without strong leadership in some cases, and greatly lacking in financial resources in other cases. Some have also encountered a lack of moral support from their own churches, because the Honduran Baptist church as a whole lacks a global missionary vision.

God has been working in people’s hearts and some are beginning to experience a sense of responsibility for spreading the gospel in other parts of the world. As the interest in cross-cultural missions grows in the coming years, there will need to be a way to encourage God-called individuals and families to pursue the fulfillment of that call. One such way will be through the creation and promotion of an agency through which churches can channel their funding of missionaries and be confident that the missionaries on the field are receiving those funds. With such an

agency in existence, the vision of Honduran Baptists sending missionaries will have a way to be expressed.

As more people begin to express a call to cross-cultural missions, there will be created an internal pressure that will need to be released. As this pressure builds, Baptists will be forced to create a sending agency if one has not already been created. Orlando Costas is quoted as saying that such mission agencies “emerge naturally and spontaneously as part of concrete historical situations.”³⁷ That process has now been initiated in Honduras and is taking shape according to the concrete historical situation in which the Honduran Baptists find themselves.

Existing Financial Models

The Southern Baptist Convention has a unique way of financing missions. Each local church decides how much, if any, of its tithes and offerings go the Cooperative Program. The funds are then sent to the state convention, which sends a percentage to the Cooperative Program. Half of what the Cooperative Program receives is sent to the International Mission Board. Most of those funds are used for administrative and missions support costs. The Lottie Moon Christmas offering goes entirely to missionary support (there is a corresponding Easter offering for domestic missions). This arrangement has allowed Southern Baptists to send and maintain both long-term (career) and short-term missionaries for many years. Currently there are about 5,500 IMB missionaries serving in more than 100 countries.

³⁷ W. Harold Fuller, *Mission-Church Dynamics* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1980), 127.

The Cooperative Program/Lottie Moon Christmas Offering approach has had its detractors over the years. One of the frequent criticisms is that missionaries are not accountable to their sending church and do not return as regularly as do those “faith” missionaries who are required to raise their own support. While there is a kernel of truth to the argument that these missionaries are not as accountable as their deputizing counterparts, they do attempt to speak in as many churches as possible while on stateside assignment (formerly referred to as furlough). Stateside assignment for IMB personnel can begin as soon as the third year on the field, but an entire year of stateside assignment is earned after four full years of service on the field. An interesting side note is that IMB missionaries are not allowed to solicit funds from Southern Baptist churches because of the Cooperative Program approach.

There is no doubt that this arrangement works so well because of the nature of the Southern Baptist churches in the United States. Until recently they were content to cooperate together in order to work on a massive scale rather than have many individual churches replicating one another’s work on multiple fields. There has been a paradigm shift, however, in the past few years as some churches have become hesitant to trust what they perceive to be a monolithic, faceless agency when they have gone to the field themselves and are confident that they can do missions as well or better than the IMB.

Such a financial arrangement is unlikely to work in Latin America. In fact, it has been tried in a couple of Latin American Baptist conventions, and has failed. The nature of the Latin American Baptist church requires a different type of funding

arrangement for international missions. The model that has shown the most promise to date is the one where the missionary raises his/her support over a period of time from individuals and churches. Within this model there is a sub-model that utilizes a special offering in conjunction with a missions conference. Federico Bertuzzi says that the Faith Promise offering has shown “surprising results” when used in conjunction with a missionary conference. He advocates distributing the Faith Promise commitment card on the last day of the conference with a challenge to children as well as adults to pray and then to commit to a certain monthly amount that is beyond their tithes.³⁸

One consideration will need to be that of the tentmaking approach to sending cross-cultural missionaries. There are numerous financial advantages to using this approach. “It is ideal for new mission agencies in new sending countries which cannot follow our Western model of full donor support or cannot send money out of the country.”³⁹ Other, related issues would need to be dealt with in this approach, but at least it offers an attractive alternative for the new agency.

Honduran Baptists will discover through trial and error what approach is best for them. If past experience is any indicator, that approach will most likely be the one where the individual raises his/her own support. It is possible that at some point in the future the dynamics of the Honduran Baptist churches will change and that they will be able to employ other approaches to funding cross-cultural missions.

³⁸ Bertuzzi, *El Despertar de las Misiones*, 47.

³⁹ Ruth Siemens, “The Vital Role of Tentmaking in Paul’s Mission Strategy,” in *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, vol. 14:3 (July-September, 1997): 127.

Conclusion

Honduran Baptists are at a point in their history when they are poised to move from a position of limited vision of God's kingdom (Jerusalem and Judea) and their relationship to it, to a broader, more biblical vision that includes going to the uttermost parts of the earth. While some leaders may be afraid of the adjustments necessary to make such a move, there has been a steady movement in that direction over the past five years.

Many challenges face the Hondurans as they endeavor to create a sending agency that will allow them to fulfill the Great Commission. There will be temptations to take shortcuts or to avoid making difficult decisions. There will be temptations to imitate others because of their perceived "success." There will be naysayers who will try to keep them from achieving what God has planned for them. But there will also be those, like myself, who are encouraging Honduran Baptists in their efforts to mature and to become all that God wants them to become. In the end, Honduran Baptists will succeed in creating a sending agency that reflects their culture and fulfills the biblical promise that they will be His witnesses in both same- and near-cultures as well as in other cultures.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

To one who was raised in the Baptist tradition, it is nearly inconceivable that there would be a need to justify a theology of missions. The reality is that not all Christians, indeed not all Baptists, are convinced that it is God's will for the Church to be engrossed in the work of taking the gospel to all nations. This chapter, therefore, is intended to set out the biblical basis for missions and for the creation of a Honduran Baptist missionary sending agency.

However, a simple biblical argument for universal missions will not suffice. Multiple treatises on various subjects related to the creation of a sending agency by Honduran Baptists are needed in order to convince the reader of the need for a Honduran Baptist sending agency. This chapter will include three treatises in addition to a general theology of missions: a theological justification of a sodality structure (in this case a mission agency), a theological justification of financial support for missionaries, and a theological justification for the pursuit of indigeneity in the process of creating a missionary sending organization.

Perhaps because of what one could call a "poverty mentality" on the part of Hondurans in general, and Honduran Baptists in particular, there is a tendency to think of Honduras as the mission field. It is, of course, a mission field, but it should also be the source of cross-cultural missionaries and funding for world missions.

That realization and a global emphasis on mission activity should mobilize Honduran Baptists to fulfill the Great Commission.

Basic Assumptions

This project begins with four basic assumptions that have Scriptural bases and that are important to the discussion at hand. These four assumptions were the impetus behind the selection of this project in order to fulfill the thesis requirements of the Doctor of Ministry degree. They are also evident throughout this thesis as being of utmost importance in the creation of a mission sending agency for Honduran Baptists.

The first assumption is the foundational understanding that God's very nature is such that He seeks and saves those that are not in fellowship with Him. He is at all times trying to reconcile man to Himself. He first calls us unto Himself, and then sends us out into the world in search of the lost. He calls us into His presence to worship Him, and there He instills in us His vision for the entire world to worship Him, thereby fulfilling Revelation 7:9. The redemption of mankind was God's plan from the beginning of creation, and He continues to work to that end by calling us to Himself, and by sending us out to call others to repentance.

God sent His Son, Jesus, as a messenger of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He sent Him as the ultimate sacrifice for the washing away of man's sin. And He sent Him to be a sender of others. For this reason, Jesus is able to predicate His sending of His followers in the same way that He had been sent by God ("as the

Father has sent me, I also send you.”).⁴⁰ God’s mission (“Missio Dei”) of restoring man to a right relationship with Himself includes the sending of those who have been restored to fellowship with Him. These “missionaries” (sent ones) are simply imitating the nature and actions of God.

The second assumption is that the Church that Jesus Christ founded is a sending Church. He meant for the Church to be sending out people to announce the Good News of salvation. This centrifugal character of the Church is in contrast to the nature of the congregation of Israel, which was supposed to call the nations to itself in a centripetal manner.⁴¹

The Master Teacher first models, then assists, then watches, then leaves His disciples that they may carry on His task. Jesus modeled missionary behavior by going “all over Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Good News.”⁴² Jesus assisted the disciples when He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration and found the disciples vainly trying to cast out a demon.⁴³ He then sent the disciples (they became apostles once He sent them out) to “preach, . . . heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, [and] cast out demons.”⁴⁴ Luke states that Jesus sent the disciples “where he himself was about to go,”⁴⁵ possibly as a form of follow-up or to watch them practice what He had modeled for them. Of course, then He leaves them, but not before promising them that “he who believes in Me, the

⁴⁰ Jn 20:21.

⁴¹ Pate, 20, 21.

⁴² Mt 4:23, Good News Bible.

⁴³ Mk 9:14-29.

⁴⁴ Mt 10:7,8.

⁴⁵ Lk 10:1 Good News Bible.

works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”⁴⁶

He also explicitly expressed His desire for the Church to be a going and proclaiming body at different times and in different ways.⁴⁷ Of course, we have the various Great Commissions which “constitute the charter for the church’s missionary action”⁴⁸ where Jesus specifically sends the apostles and by extension the entire Church (and that includes Honduran Baptists). The Great Commission as found in Matthew is predicated on the going of the Church with the goal of making disciples. Jesus relates his own experience of being sent by His Father (Jn 20:21) to that of the apostles He is sending out, thus personalizing the Great Commission. As Charles Van Engen says, “The apostolic church of Jesus Christ would be seen as a proclaiming force.”⁴⁹

The Christian Church as a sedentary, maintenance-oriented structure that has as its goal its own self-preservation is completely alien to the New Testament. In fact, when Jesus founds the Church (Mt 16:18) he says that “the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” (KJV) The imagery here is not of a defensive church that is trying to withstand the onslaught of Hell, but of a victorious church that shall triumph over the power of death.⁵⁰ This is shown in the translation *The Message* where it says “a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out.”

⁴⁶ Jn 14:12.

⁴⁷ Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:46-49; Jn 20:21; Ac 1:8.

⁴⁸ Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique From the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1976), 72.

⁴⁹ Charles Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 68.

⁵⁰ Taken from Doctor of Ministry seminar notes of Dr. Timothy Tennent, January 2002.

A third foundational understanding for this project is that Christ intended for His Church to cross cultural barriers in the process of proclamation. This can be seen first of all by His use of the word “nations” (ἐθνε) on different occasions, especially in the Great Commission in Mt 28:18-20.⁵¹ It has also been argued that the participle πορευθέντες used in Matthew’s Great Commission that is often translated as “Go” can also mean “‘to cross boundaries’ – sociological boundaries, racial boundaries, cultural boundaries, geographical boundaries.”⁵²

Additionally, we can see His desire for the Church to be a going and proclaiming body by His command in Acts 1:8 that spreads out geographically from Jerusalem “to the ends of the earth.” Even the book of Acts reflects this emphasis as has been pointed out by A. T. Robertson. “The events follow this outline: Jerusalem till the end of chapter 7, with the martyrdom of Stephen, the scattering of the saints through Judea and Samaria in chapter 8, the conversion of Saul, chapter 9, the spread of the gospel to Romans in Caesarea by Peter (chapter 10), to Greeks in Antioch (chapter 11), finally Paul’s world tours and arrest and arrival in Rome (chapter 11 to chapter 28).”⁵³

He also informed the disciples that this “gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the *whole world* as a testimony to *all the nations*, and then the end will come (*italics mine*).”⁵⁴ It is significant that Peter’s confession and Jesus’ subsequent

⁵¹ See H. Cornell Goerner’s book “All Nations in God’s Purpose: What the Bible teaches about Missions” where he shows “All Nations” in the books of Moses, in the prophets, and in the Psalms.

⁵² J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 106, 107.

⁵³ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 11. See also F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 36,37.

⁵⁴ Mt 24:14.

founding of His Church occurred in Caesarea Philippi, well outside of the geographical boundaries of Israel.⁵⁵ While this fact may, or may not, have been lost on the disciples, it should not be lost on us: Jesus was trying to make a point about the universal nature of the gospel.

Even in His preaching, Jesus proclaimed that the gospel was intended for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. In Luke 4 Jesus made the synagogue crowd angry by pointing out how God had blessed Gentiles even when there was tremendous need among the Jews. They had listened intently to Him and “were speaking well of Him”⁵⁶ until He brought up God’s actions on behalf of Gentiles.

Last, but not least, is the fact that He taught by example, healing and bringing hope to Gentiles (e.g. Syrophenician woman’s daughter, centurion’s servant, etc.) in a time and place when the most religious and learned men considered the Gentiles to be hopeless and beyond God’s election.

A fourth foundational understanding of this thesis is that the local church should be the initiator of the sending process (in human terms; the Holy Spirit, of course, initiates the entire process).⁵⁷ While there may be some disagreement as to the role of the local church acting as a sodality, there are strong arguments for the local church being the initiator of the sending process. Denis Lane says “the principal responsibility in the sending of a missionary should rest in the local church”⁵⁸ because they will be the people who best know him and who will be best

⁵⁵ Mt 16:16.

⁵⁶ Lk 4:22.

⁵⁷ In a later section we will examine the modality/sodality relationship of church and sending agency.

⁵⁸ Lane, 29.

prepared to judge his call. This is one reason why a sodality should never unilaterally assume the role of a modality.

The Acts 13:1-3 passage illustrates that after the Holy Spirit has given His seal of approval to missionaries, it is the role of the local church to add its seal of approval. By formally sending the missionaries, the local church is stating that these individuals have been recognized as being called of God to missions and have demonstrated their willingness to go. They have been disciplined and have given evidence of God's work within their lives.

In the case of Barnabas and Saul, the church laid hands on them and sent them out into an unknown future. The laying on of hands may have been as much for the benefit of those who might receive these two men as it was for the men themselves and for the church that sent them out. It may not even have been clear to any of those involved whether or not these two men would ever return to that particular church. It appears from the Acts account that both the senders and the sent were simply being obedient to what the Holy Spirit had indicated they should do. As it turned out, Paul and Barnabas did return to Antioch and were able to give a full report of their activities.⁵⁹

It is also notable that they did not go to Jerusalem to report on their mission activities⁶⁰ or to seek permission beforehand. Paul and Barnabas apparently viewed themselves as being accountable primarily to the local church that laid hands on

⁵⁹ Ac 14:27.

⁶⁰ Robertson, vol. 3, 220.

them and sent them out even though Paul later seems to make his own strategy and “seemed very much on his own.”⁶¹

Paul and Barnabas may have evolved in their understanding of the role of the sending church in their ministry. It is conceivable that the farther they got from Antioch (in both time and distance), the less oversight the sending church exerted on their ministry. That, however, was probably more of a function of the limitations of communications and travel at that time than a principle for us to follow. With today’s technology, the sending church can both see and hear in real time what is happening in the lives of the missionaries, their disciples, and the congregations they start.

While Paul always considered his apostleship to have come from Jesus Christ, he made a point of being in submission to governing bodies. He apparently felt the need to equate his apostleship with that of Peter and the others, but he also desired to be an example to all believers of one who was in submission to authorities. He preached such submission⁶² and tried to model it as well.⁶³ Paul would almost certainly tell today’s “sent out ones” that they must submit themselves to those in authority, including the sending church in the case of missionaries.

Another, related, issue is the common New Testament practice of issuing letters of commendation (Ac 15:23-27; 18:24-28; Rom 16:1,2; 2 Co 8:16-24; Philemon) or introduction (Eph 6:21,22; Col 4:7-9).⁶⁴ This practice can be just as useful today as it was in the early Church. A local church commending or

⁶¹ Winter, 2.

⁶² Ro 13:1; Tit 3:1; Heb 13:17

⁶³ Ac 21:23ff; Ac 23:5

⁶⁴ John C. Barlow, *Global Strategy* (N.p.: Christian Missions in Many Lands, 1978), 28-37.

introducing a brother it is sending to another church gives that brother a legitimacy that allows him to participate in that local church and its mission efforts immediately.⁶⁵

Without this local church approval there is bound to be much less accountability on the part of the missionaries as there would be if they were identified as having been sent from a specific church. There are numerous para-church organizations that act as sending agencies (including mine), but these agencies actually become insulators of the missionaries from the very churches that have sent them in the first place. The para-church organization expects obedience to its policies and strategies even if these are contrary to those of the sending church. Because of this tendency, there needs to be more of an emphasis on the actual sending out by the local church of those who are being sent through an agency. The issue of agency will be addressed later in this chapter.

The accountability issue is critical in many of our Western Christian churches. It is not as important to those who have an “independent” mindset. In fact, there may be times when a mission agency is formed because an individual or group is tired of having to be accountable to others whom they may feel are not as well equipped to make strategic decisions about the mission effort as they themselves are. The explosion of “independent” mission agencies may, in fact, be working against accountability for Christian workers.

The move away from a distinction between clergy and laity, especially in the area of missions, is gaining momentum as more Christians take the Great

⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that in Acts 16:2 Timothy, who is about to begin accompanying Paul, was “well spoken of” by the local believers.

Commission passages⁶⁶ seriously and focus on what have been called “creative access” countries.⁶⁷ In these countries there is no “missionary visa” granted by the government, so those who wish to take the gospel to such places must find creative ways to have access to those countries. Individuals with marketable skills are able to move about (somewhat) freely in the global economy, making them prime candidates for carrying the gospel to places where members of the clergy are not welcome.

Some of the early missionaries worked in what we would now call “tentmaking” ministries: they worked to earn a living and did missions at the same time. In fact, the reason we refer to this as “tentmaking” is because of Luke’s mention in Ac 18:3 that Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla were tent-makers. As Latin Americans have begun to see the opportunities for missions in areas that are closed to “missionaries,” they have begun to recognize the place for tent-makers in their ranks. This, of course, raises other issues (such as accountability) that need to be addressed by those creating the Honduran Baptist sending agency.

This approach is somewhat easier for a local church to take responsibility for instead of trying to supply the entire financial support (including ministry support items such as vehicle expenses, literature, in-country travel, etc.) and the logistical needs of a full-time missionary. Some tentmakers may be able to even get part or all of their moving expenses paid by the business or organization for which they will be

⁶⁶ Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:46-49; Jn 20:21; Ac 1:8.

⁶⁷ Detlef Blocher, “Testificar y Trabajar,” *Trabajando Tu Llamado a las Naciones*, ed. Jonatán Lewis (Miami: Unilit, 1998), 29.

working. Visas and other logistical needs may be taken care of by others as well.

These items would take a tremendous load off the sending church.

Of course, there are negative aspects inherent in tentmaking. Jonatán Lewis points to numerous weaknesses in tentmakers that can be generalized as:

1. They tend to be “Lone Rangers” who do not have extensive backing and accountability built into their plans.
2. They often do not appreciate the importance of learning the language and the local culture.
3. They often arrive on the field unprepared biblically and spiritually for what awaits them.
4. They are forced to spend so much time on the secular job that their ministry suffers.⁶⁸

Ruth Siemens, a fervent supporter of tentmaking, counters those arguments with some of her own. She says that “far more Paul-type tentmakers are needed than ever before in history”⁶⁹ and that many times those who are called tentmakers are nothing more than expatriates working without any sense of call or mission. She argues that those missionaries who go as tentmakers often “have better training in every way than their regular missionary counterparts.”⁷⁰

These three foundational assumptions are at the heart of this project to encourage and enable Honduran Baptists to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ by creating an indigenous sending agency. While all three of these

⁶⁸ Donald Hamilton, “Como planificar para el éxito,” *Trabajando Tu Llamado a Las Naciones*, ed. Jonatán Lewis (Miami: Unilit, 1998) 15 (My translation).

⁶⁹ Siemens, 121.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 127.

foundational assumptions specifically address the role of the Church in cross-cultural missions, the realities of the Honduran Baptist churches in the early 21st Century do not allow for individual churches to be able to fulfill this role by themselves. They will need to work together in order to achieve the fulfillment of the Great Commission. A discussion of the modality/sodality roles can be found later in this chapter. The three assumptions form a foundation on which to begin to examine other aspects of the theological framework for this thesis.

The Missiology of Jesus

Jesus had a plan for world missions. It began very simply and without a great deal of fanfare. He began with a small group of men who probably had not impressed any of their contemporaries as men who would change the world. By investing three years of His life in their training and development, Jesus prepared them for world missions. He gave them opportunities to practice what they had learned, and He gave them time to report the results of their efforts. He then sent out others so that the original twelve (and all who were to follow) would not think that the task was just for those original twelve. This section will look at how Jesus began to fulfill the Great Commission even before He gave it to His followers.

The Missionary Training of the Twelve

When we read in the New Testament how Jesus took twelve men and invested His life into their development, we see how he was preparing them to be missionaries. His vision for a catholic Church included the preparation of these men

to be cross-cultural missionaries, leaving their own culture and taking the gospel with them into other cultures. Jesus did not embark on this effort without an observable plan. We can see that he not only taught the disciples/apostles about the gospel being for all nations, he introduced them to a few of those nations.

While the journeys to Jerusalem and back to Galilee may not have been the first time the disciples had made that trip, they probably had never dared to take the route through Samaria. Jesus first takes them to Samaria as part of their missionary training and enlarges their understanding of the Kingdom of God to include even the Samaritans. The fact that Jesus chose to call “many of the Samaritans” to belief in Himself through the testimony of an adulterous woman who was an outcast of society must have impressed upon the disciples the very different nature of Jesus’ teachings and manner of operating.

Sometime after this initial, short-term mission trip, Jesus took the disciples farther a field. This time they went to the region of Tyre and Sidon (Mt 15:21 and Mk 7:24). Shortly after that trip they journeyed north to Caesarea Philippi (and possibly even farther) and Jesus probably healed the epileptic boy in this region (Mt 17:14; Mk 9:14; and Lk 9:37). Other short-term mission trips took them to Decapolis and other regions beyond the Jordan River.

In all these journeys Jesus was training the disciples for the day in which He would send them out “to the uttermost parts of the world.” There needed to be more, however, to this training than simply talking about Gentiles being part of the Kingdom of God and going to places where there were more Gentiles than Jews. The disciples needed to be exposed to individuals from other races and cultures in

order to fully comprehend the breadth of the ministry to which Jesus had called them.

The disciples' exposure to individuals of different races and cultures included the Roman centurion whose servant Jesus healed, the Syrophoenician (Canaanite) woman whose daughter was demon-possessed, the Gadarenes who pleaded with Jesus to leave their region after He cast the demons out of the men who lived in the tombs, and of course the Samaritans they met on several trips through Samaria.

All of these people would have made the disciples ceremonially unclean by Jewish law. But Jesus apparently wanted the disciples to experience such things as talking to men who lived in tombs (and who not only were unclean, but undesirable people to society), and exposure to a herd of pigs and those who lived and worked with them. What an eye-opening and cross-cultural experience for these Jewish men!

Jesus' teaching also had a cross-cultural missions dimension to it "like one who knew that His work concerned all nations and all time."⁷¹ From the beginning of His ministry when He challenged the notion that God's love and care were only for the Jewish nation as He spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth, to His Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, Jesus taught cross-cultural missions. As we know from the tenth chapter of the book of Acts, it took a vision from God for Peter to finally understand what Jesus had been trying to teach him over the years. But, of course, the disciples were characteristically slow to perceive the

⁷¹ A.B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971), 20.

ramifications of Jesus' teaching (Mk 9:32; Jn 12:16). As A.B. Bruce says, "They were indeed godly men, who had already shown the sincerity of their piety by forsaking all for their Master's sake. But at the time of their call they were exceedingly ignorant, narrow-minded, superstitious, full of Jewish prejudices, misconceptions, and animosities. They had much to unlearn of what was bad, as well as much to learn of what was good, and they were slow both to learn and to unlearn. Old beliefs already in possession of their minds made the communication of new religious ideas a difficult task."⁷²

He taught that there are other sheep, not of the Jewish flock, that He would bring to join them and they would be one flock with one Shepherd (Jn 10:16). He taught that the Temple, the holy residence of God, would be a house of prayer for all nations (Mk 11:17). He also taught that the gospel would be preached to the whole world, or all nations (Mt 24:14; Mk 13:10). When asked for an example of who one's neighbor would be, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan and portrayed the despised Samaritan as a righteous person loving his neighbor in a sacrificial way.

An important part of the training of the disciples was the follow-up that occurred upon their return to Jesus. In both Mark's and Luke's accounts Jesus hears from the disciples their accounts of the mission experience. He then takes them away from the crowds to an isolated spot so that they can rest and He can give them some attention. However, the crowd discovers where they have gone and follows them. Jesus teaches the crowd, then gives the disciples another mission opportunity: feed the five thousand men and their families.

⁷² Ibid., 14.

It would seem logical that a group of men that had just returned from a mission trip in which they were able to cast out demons and heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness, would be able to transfer that experience to the opportunity with which they were now confronted. They were not, however, able to do so. But in spite of their inability to translate one experience into another, Jesus was able to teach them about God's power to provide for needs.

The Sending of the Twelve

Jesus gave the disciples some practical experience when He sent them out by twos into the surrounding areas to cast out demons and "heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." This is somewhat surprising because it comes so early in the ministry of Jesus. One would think that Jesus would have employed this "practicum" toward the very end of His ministry. His plan, apparently, was to give the disciples a lesson in immediate obedience.

This unsupervised, short-term mission trip would be difficult at times, as He made clear in His pre-trip orientation. It appears that He intended for the disciples to experience the harshness of same-culture missions before He prepared them more fully for cross-cultural missions and the difficulties associated with them.

It is also significant that Jesus sent the disciples out in groups of two. There is no Old Testament precedent for this among the prophets. Most likely Jesus initiated this approach to missions as a means of offering encouragement and support for each worker. Throughout the New Testament we see the practice of mission "teams" working together (Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, Barnabas and

John Mark, Peter was accompanied by “some of the brethren from Joppa” when he went to speak to Cornelius, and Paul seems to have always traveled with an entourage).

Before He sent the disciples out, however, Jesus gave them instructions (which remind us of the interrogatives we deal with in this chapter) about where to go, to whom to go, what to say and do and what not to do, when to bless, when not to bless. It was through this appointment process and the giving of authority that He transformed them from mere followers to missionaries, from mere disciples to apostles.

Included in this orientation were two important concepts: missionary support (for short-term missions) and missionary vision (for same-culture missions). The first concept was meant to facilitate a fairly quick mission trip without a great deal of logistical preparation. The disciples were instructed to preach and heal without receiving any kind of remuneration. They were to receive whatever kind of sustenance and housing was provided for them. This blessing was to be rewarded with a spoken blessing for those who provided for the missionary.

The second concept was meant to give the disciples a brief exposure to missions. By going only to their own culture, they were able to articulate and incarnate what they had already observed and heard from Jesus. In spite of the persecution and rejection they would experience, the opportunity would prove to be an excellent one for their development as apostles.

Jesus’ appointment sermon to them clarified for them what His role was, what their role was to be, and how they could expect to be treated by those to whom

they were sent. It painted a picture of rejection by many of those to whom they would go. It described for them the difficulties they would encounter, and the trials they would have to endure (scourge, betray, persecute, caused to be put to death, hated, etc. are terms used in that appointment sermon).

The same appointment sermon described for them the cost of discipleship and obedience. In case the disciples had not yet recognized the depth of the hatred for Jesus, He made it clear that He was to be rejected, and that they, as His followers, would likewise be rejected and mistreated. This would not be an easy mission trip.

If we look at this from the point of view that these disciples/apostles were still very immature in their faith and in their understanding of who Jesus was, it is amazing that Jesus would entrust to them this responsibility. However, the message He gave them to proclaim was a simple one: “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” To this He added the power to cast out demons and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. This is truly amazing. In fact, A.B.Bruce points out that while the message to be preached was limited to “the Kingdom of God is at hand,” they were generously given “unlimited powers of healing.”⁷³

Why would Jesus take a small group of semi-dedicated men and send them out preaching a simple message, but also demonstrating miraculous powers? The answer seems to be: to demonstrate to them and to future generations what God can do with meager resources. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels **so that** the

⁷³ Ibid., 101.

surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.” (2 Co 4:7, emphasis mine)

It is my desire to see Honduran (and Panamanian) Baptists mobilized for global missions in spite of their apparent lack of financial resources and strength of numbers. I believe that by enabling them to begin sending out cross-cultural missionaries, I will also be sowing the seeds of a more mature and sustained missionary effort. If 11 of the 12 men Jesus chose could go from being unbelieving, weak followers to men who would change the world, indeed turn “the world upside down,”⁷⁴ then I believe that dedicated and obedient Latin American Baptists can do the same.

The Sending of the Seventy

While Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give accounts of the sending out of the twelve, only Luke tells of the sending out of the seventy (or seventy-two as some manuscripts have it). It is significant that these “seventy others” (NASB) were sent out not too long after the twelve had returned from their short-term mission trip. In case anyone might begin to think only those closest to Jesus, or a priestly class of followers, could be sent as missionaries, Jesus chose another, larger group of disciples to do the very thing the twelve had done. This is an exciting example of mobilization. It shows Jesus sending many missionaries, it shows Him sending them fairly early in their discipleship process, and it shows Him sending them with His power and authority to bless or curse and to heal.

⁷⁴ Ac 17:6, King James Version.

The number of men sent out on this second missionary trip is significant, also. The Jews believed that there were seventy nations that comprised the world. The table of nations presented in Genesis 10 lists seventy names (seventy-two in the Septuagint which may explain the differences between the New Testament manuscripts). Moses also used seventy elders to help him judge Israel. Additionally, the Sanhedrin was composed of seventy men, probably for the same reason: seventy represented completeness.⁷⁵ The symbolism of these seventy men representing the nations of the world being sent out on mission is another excellent example for us of the role of mobilization among the peoples of the earth today.

For the most part, Jesus' instructions to these missionaries are similar to those given to the twelve. The only notable differences are the instructions not to "stop to greet anyone on the road," not to "move around from one house to another," (although this was included in Luke's account of the sending of the twelve) and to eat and drink "whatever they offer you." (GNB)

It may be that Jesus had observed these behaviors on the short-term mission trip he sent the twelve on, and added these details to the instructions given to the seventy as a reminder to them and to the twelve of the urgency of the proclamation of the gospel. This apparent urgency can also be seen in Jesus' commands to the disciples, especially the proscription of greeting people on the road. Apparently, this was a common part of the culture and one that was likely to keep people from fulfilling their obligations.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Taken from Doctor of Ministry seminar notes of Dr. Timothy Tennent, January 2002.

⁷⁶ Robertson, vol. 2, 145.

On closer examination it can be seen that these commands are precisely the kinds of things that cross-cultural missionaries, or those unaccustomed to interaction with other cultures, would need to be taught. Whereas the command to eat whatever they offer you and to eat “what is set before you” could be understood in terms of quantity, it can also be understood to refer to unfamiliar foods, or in the case of the Jewish disciples, forbidden foods. Every missionary has had his moments of doubt when confronted with a meal that is either unidentifiable or all together too identifiable.

The other command with cross-cultural implications is the admonition not to stop to greet anyone on the road. While this also had an intra-cultural aspect, it is particularly relevant to cross-cultural missions where one can easily find oneself consumed in relationships that hinder the spread of the gospel. In many Arab countries the nature of friendship is so demanding and so intense that one can easily get sidetracked from one’s obligations by the demands of the friendship.⁷⁷ Even in Latin America, friendships can take many hours away from ministry.

Jesus’ example of sending seventy other men in addition to the disciples is an excellent challenge to the false conception that only a chosen few can be missionaries. Whether long-term or short-term, many Christians, even Honduran Baptists, can be sent into all nations in order to announce that the kingdom of God has come near to them.

⁷⁷ Susan L. Wilson, *Culture Shock! Egypt* (Portland, Oregon: Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company, 2001).

The Sending of the Rest

If the entire world was to be leavened by the gospel of Jesus Christ, there would need to be more than just a few men going to their own racial group to accomplish that. The various Great Commissions that Jesus gave to His disciples bring us to the universality of the charge to make disciples of all nations. That charge was universal in that it was for all Christians, not just for the first century followers of Jesus.

A command such as the one Jesus gave needed to be based on some sort of authority. If Christians were to begin taking the message of Jesus Christ to the nations, they would need some sort of marching orders or commission. Such a commission would need to be based on the authority of the one giving it. This is why Jesus prefaced His Great Commission with a statement about His authority to give such a commission. The entire challenge to the Church to extend itself throughout the world could only be based on the authority of One who had the authority to tell His followers when to go, how to go, and to whom to go.

Jesus was able to give that commission precisely because He, too, had been given a commission by God. Because Jesus had been sent, He was able to send His followers. He led by example. He then told His disciples that He was sending them just as His Father had sent Him. And just as He had obeyed His Father's command, He expected His disciples to follow His command. He also expected that the disciples that His disciples made would also follow the example given to them, and they, too, would go out, then send their own disciples in an ongoing perpetuation of disciple-making.

Jesus also made a transition in the later stages of His earthly ministry in regards to His instructions to those He sent out on mission. Early in His ministry He sent out the Twelve, then later the Seventy with similar instructions: "Take nothing with you for the trip: no walking stick, no beggar's bag, no food, no money, not even an extra shirt." Both these missionary journeys were intended to be short-term and to the Jews only. Jesus' explicit instructions were appropriate for these short-term efforts among same-culture peoples.

However, in preparation for His departure from them, Jesus transitioned to a universal gospel that included the Gentiles. That is reflected in His instructions to the disciples regarding mission efforts. In Lk 22:35, 36 Jesus asks them if they lacked anything on their short-term, same-culture learning trips. When they respond that they lacked nothing, He changed His instructions to them and said "But now, whoever has a purse or a bag must take it; and whoever does not have a sword must sell his coat and buy one." The difference between a short-term mission experience among people of one's own ethno-linguistic and religious group and a long-term, perhaps even permanent, mission experience among the many Gentile groups is considerable. There is a need for a new paradigm for these disciples who cannot even begin to imagine what awaits them on the cross-cultural mission field.

Another, extremely important, part of this new paradigm is that it is to the nations. It is here that we find the culmination of Jesus' teaching regarding the realization of the kingdom of God. Christians are to make disciples of all ethnic groups. In order for them to do that, some Christians will need to go to those ethnic groups, regardless of where they are. The old paradigm permitted short-term, local

mission trips, but the new paradigm calls for a broader perspective that includes the entire human race.

The Matthean version of the Great Commission, of course, uses the Greek words “παντα τά εθνη” to speak of “all the ethnic groups” to which Jesus’ disciples are to go. This was the most common word for Gentiles in the New Testament and with the inclusion of παντα would have been understood as such by the disciples.⁷⁸ It would have meant all those other, non-Jewish people out there in the world. In order to clarify this even further, Jesus announced just before ascending into heaven that His disciples “will be witnesses for [Him] in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”⁷⁹ These two, complementary, statements show the universality of the gospel message and point to the task of Jesus’ followers to take that message to all the ethnic groups of the world.

As if these teachings of Jesus were not enough, God chose to send His Holy Spirit in a show of power and purpose. The power was referred in Acts 1:8 as a prerequisite of the disciples being His witnesses “in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The purpose was shown in that the apostles were able to speak in the languages of those who were present that day from many different “nations.” Not only were these people Jews who lived in those nations, but also proselytes who were “τά εθνη” to whom Jesus had sent His disciples.

⁷⁸ Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), vol. 2, 369-372. See also Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), vol. 2, 790-800.

⁷⁹ Ac 1:8, Good News Bible.

By giving the apostles this opportunity, God had prepared them even more for the work to which He was going to send them to do. This mission-trip-without-having-to-travel experience gave the apostles additional experience in cross-cultural evangelism, but it also gave them a taste of success. The apostles themselves had not experienced much success since their short-term mission trip. This experience, where more than 3,000 men became followers of Jesus, gave the apostles a “jump start” on their cross-cultural missions efforts.

The fact that many of these people who were visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost returned to their countries and served as heralds of the gospel gives even more credence to the proposition that the privilege of sharing the gospel with “all nations” did not just lie with the apostles, but was for all who heard the gospel and who had been affected by its message. Some of these “ran to their tribes and villages with the good news. They took the Gospel clothed in the language and culture of their people, not as a foreign import.”⁸⁰

The leavening effect of the gospel on the world that Jesus referred to in His parable of the kingdom of God in Mt 13.33 had begun. The leavening of the world would be done as one Christian passed on to another the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. The role of evangelist and missionary was for every believer, not just a few special people.

Interrogatives

It is natural as one studies the Bible to ask questions. It is also natural for one who is seeking to be obedient to the Great Commission to ask certain questions.

⁸⁰ Siemens, 127.

The following interrogatives inform the missiologist of the complexity and vastness of the missionary enterprise.

The Sender (Who)

God is a sending God. He sent both heavenly and human messengers to His loved ones on earth. Throughout the Old Testament we see Him sending messengers to His people with messages of encouragement, warnings, and deliverance. He sent His only Son to be the Savior of the world and to, in turn, send others. It is God's generous, loving nature to send.

In Matthew 28:18 Jesus prefaces the Great Commission by stating that "all authority has been given to [Him] in heaven and on earth."⁸¹ The sending of the apostles and the sending of all subsequent missionaries is predicated on this fact. Jesus Christ, in His divinity, decides who goes, to whom they should go, when they should go, and how they should go. In the Old Testament we see God, His messengers, and His Spirit calling people to specific missions. The account of Moses' encounter with the burning bush specifically says, "the angel of the LORD appeared to him."⁸² "The angel of the LORD appeared to" Gideon also as God began the process of calling him to service.⁸³ God's calling of the prophets and His sending with specific messages to specific people and nations is another example of the God who sends.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Mt 28:18.

⁸² Ex 3:2.

⁸³ Jdg 6:12.

⁸⁴ God sent Isaiah and Jeremiah to numerous individuals as well as to nations.

Additionally, we see that Jesus tells those who were gathered at His ascension that they would be *His* witnesses. They were to tell what they had seen and heard in the life of the Incarnate Son of God. In the Lukan Great Commission Jesus tells the disciples that He will be crucified and resurrected on the third day and that they will take His message of repentance and forgiveness to all nations. Immediately after that He tells them “You are witnesses of these things.” It is clear that Jesus is passing on to the disciples a responsibility to make public what God has decided to reveal about Himself.

The fact that God sends individuals as His messengers throughout the world with His message should not surprise us. Nor should the fact that these message-bearers in many cases do not have special training or a heightened level of holiness. The centrifugal nature of God’s plan to spread His message should be seen as a natural result of truly good news which is sowed across the lands of the earth by the blowing wind of the Holy Spirit.

The local church acts as the secondary sender. Since the local church is the primary grouping of those who have decided to be disciples of Jesus, it seems obvious that those whom God has called will come out of the local churches. Anyone can say that he has been sent of God to serve Him, but the person who is identified with a specific local church will have the explicit approval of that church that it is in agreement that God has, indeed, sent that person out to do missions.

The church recognizes those called by God and sent out by God. Jesus said that we will recognize His disciples by their fruits and that by bearing much fruit

they will prove to be His disciples.⁸⁵ Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos preaching and then took him and, after giving him additional training, sent him out with a letter of introduction.⁸⁶ In much the same way the local church sends out a missionary bearing a letter of approval of his life, his faithfulness, and his calling.

The church prepares those God has sent out and also commissions them. Just as Jesus called His disciples before they received their three-year apprenticeship, so He often calls those who have not yet received training to serve Him. The local church, then, needs to prepare the person for the mission to which God has sent him. The assumption here is that there is someone within the church who is capable of training this person. Here the local church may need to cooperate with another church in the training of the one who is called. The example of Apollos mentioned earlier is a good example of how a person who demonstrates God's call and who is already serving God can be finely tuned and then sent out to be an effective messenger of the gospel.

The local church also provides encouragement,⁸⁷ accountability,⁸⁸ and financial assistance⁸⁹ for the ones sent out. Once the servant arrives on the field of service, he will need to be able to communicate with those who sent him. Of course, the ambassador metaphor works well here: what ambassador does not maintain good communication with the government that sent him? Likewise, the servant of God will need even more encouragement once on the field than he needed in preparation

⁸⁵ Mt 7:20; Jn 15:8.

⁸⁶ Ac 18:24-28.

⁸⁷ Ac 14:26; 18:27.

⁸⁸ Ac 14:27.

⁸⁹ Php 4:16.

for going. He must be held accountable to someone for his actions. In many cases there will be a financial arrangement that will require the servant to maintain good relationships with those who are giving financial assistance to the ministry.

The Sent (Whom)

Those who are sent have personally encountered the risen Christ. He has made a difference in their lives and has made them into new people. He has gifted them and then called them to service. They have counted the cost and have determined to follow Him obediently as He leads them into fields of service that they may not have ever considered before. Their sense of call is important for those times when there are difficulties on the field or perhaps they experience a sense of doubt or discouragement due to lack of anticipated results. A strong sense of call or “divine direction is absolutely indispensable in missionary service.”⁹⁰

Since a “call to missions” can be such a subjective experience, “that profound sense of call should be shared by others.”⁹¹ Before one is sent out from a local church through a mission agency, it is highly recommended that the person have a “seal of approval” upon their lives as well as their ministries. The best people to give such approval are those who have been in the best position to see either the sent one’s daily lifestyle or ministry, or both. When such people are able to recommend a person without reservations or qualms, then those who are sending the person can feel more confident that the person’s call to mission is legitimate.

⁹⁰ Lane, 20 (My translation).

⁹¹ Ibid.

Those who are sent are people who can interact comfortably with other people, especially with those of a different culture. They are people who can adapt to a different way of life, perhaps learn another language (or several), and who can conform to the social norms of a culture different from their own. They are able to subsume their own cultural perspectives to those of the host culture that are not explicitly in conflict with Christianity.

Sometimes the ones who are sent have sanguine temperaments and get along well with everyone they meet. A biblical example of such a person is Barnabas.⁹² Other times the sent ones have choleric temperaments or are those who tend to get things done and who are good at confronting people with their sin and resulting need for forgiveness. It is desirable, of course, that those with this kind of personality be “speaking the truth in love.”⁹³ The apostle Peter may be an example of such a person. The apostle Paul also seems to have had this kind of personality which allowed him to take a stand on a number of occasions as recorded in Acts as well as the time he confronted Peter with his hypocrisy toward the Gentiles.⁹⁴

The Task (What)

What the missionary does on the mission field will vary from person to person and place to place, but the primary function of the missionary will be as a Christ-like ambassador of the gospel. So, the initial task of the missionary will be to

⁹² Some biblical characters appear to fit the profiles of the four main temperaments often attributed to human personalities. We cannot, however, be certain that individuals fit neatly into artificial constructs that attempt to explain human behavior. I do believe, however, that there is great value in recognizing a person’s temperament when evaluating him for cross-cultural mission service.

⁹³ Eph 4:15.

⁹⁴ Gal 2:11-14.

live out a Christ-centered, holy life that demonstrates that he knows the Savior whom he preaches. The secondary task will be to find ways to communicate effectively the gospel message in appropriate ways to those to whom he has been sent.

The missionary will have a strategy for extending the kingdom of God. In “open” countries this may be through personal evangelism and church planting. In more closed countries, it may be through the use of a platform that allows the missionary to reside in that country and have access to the people, but should still include personal evangelism and church planting. Whatever his platform, it will provide opportunities to share the gospel orally as well as through his manner of life.

The effective missionary will want to work with others in a team fashion so that all aspects of the gospel message can be communicated. There may be a team member who specializes in discipleship while another specializes in worship. Both of these functions are important and complement one another in the spiritual growth of the new believer. By modeling teamwork, the missionary is actually portraying an important characteristic of the Christian Church: unity.

The Timing (When)

We are able to discern from both the Old Testament as well as the New Testament that God has times and seasons when He is ready to act. He calls and anoints those who are to fulfill His will at specific times. Examples of these instances are: Jeremiah (called from his mother’s womb), Moses (saved from death

in order to lead the Israelites out of bondage), and Jesus (whose redemptive presence in the world came “in the fullness of time”).⁹⁵

There may be times when God disperses His people in large numbers because of persecution or some other socio-political uprising, or through a Great Awakening type event, but basically He calls individuals to go as He has worked in their hearts over a period of time. He also determines the length of time for them to be on mission.

There seems to be a trend toward shorter missions careers, possibly because of the tendency to avoid long-term commitments by young people. As of 2002, only 50% of Latin American missionaries were serving for longer than three years. Thirty-seven percent of Latin American missionaries served between one and three years. Thirteen percent served for less than one year.⁹⁶ While there are very good reasons for desiring a longer tenure on the mission field, it may very well be that God is planning to make His mission force more mobile and more dependent upon Him than upon the traditional accouterments of long-term mission service.

The Places (Where)

God desires for His people to be on mission wherever they are. By using a participle to begin the Great Commission (often translated “going”), He makes clear that we are to be making disciples as we go about our daily lives. In the world in which we presently live there is such a mixing of the cultures and ethnic groups that

⁹⁵ Gal 4:4.

⁹⁶ http://www.comibam.org/transpar/_menus/esp/web4-ib.htm

one can be assured of obeying the Great Commission when God calls one to disciple those in one's own community.

God may send His servant to another part of his country of birth or residence whereby the missionary does not have to cross many cultural barriers in order to be effective. Our highly mobile world allows for this kind of going much more easily than at any time in the past.

There are also those who are sent by God to cross multiple cultural and linguistic barriers in order to take His message to the "nations." Some of these nations are difficult to reach geographically (such as some ethno-linguistic groups), while others are hard to enter legally (the so-called closed or hard access countries). Some countries are more practical for Latin Americans to enter because they can blend in due to the similarities in culture or physiognomy.

All of these places, at home, somewhere in one's own country, or crossing cultural and geographical barriers, enable one to be a witness of the gospel message in fulfillment of the Ac 1:8 prophecy. Whether the four specific locations are meant to be taken literally or represent cultural/linguistic targets is irrelevant. Jesus is telling the disciples that despite their current circumstances they will take the gospel in all directions. The "where" of the gospel message was not limited to the places He had taken them or that they knew from experience; in fact, there are no limits to where the gospel will go.

The Call (How)

The way a person hears God's call to missions may vary greatly. It may come through a sermon or Bible study, through hearing a missionary speak, or through contact with a person from a different culture. That call may be instantaneous or it may take years to develop.

God often lays a country or people group on someone's heart and that person thinks about that country or people group all the time. The Christian may pray every day or on a regular basis for that country/people group. At other times a person finds himself working with a people group and slowly becomes identified with that group. God is, in His various ways, "throwing out" laborers into the fields (εκβαλλω – Mt 9:38).

Sometimes there is a momentous experience that leads the missionary in certain directions that may not have been expected or even desired previously. Those who are sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit may find themselves having dreams or visions much as Paul did in receiving the Macedonian Call.⁹⁷

The trend toward short-term mission trips has increased the number of people feeling called into missions because of their experiences. Within my own sending agency it has been noted (at a recent orientation for field personnel) that 2/3 of all incoming missionaries have had previous experience in cross-cultural missions through a short-term mission trip.

⁹⁷ Ac 16:9,10.

The Purpose (Why)

God wants to call all men unto Himself.⁹⁸ He utilizes those who have been reconciled to Him and who enjoy a personal relationship with Him to act as ambassadors for Him in bringing people to Him. A vital part of that personal relationship is the assistance one gives to those who are in need of being reconciled to God.

Why would God send people to proclaim the gospel? The apostle Paul says God is well pleased through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. Eph 4:11-13 says that the leaders that God appoints are to equip the saints (believers) for the work of ministry so that the body of Christ, the Church, will be built up with the end result being a mature man.

Throughout the Old Testament we see mentioned the desire of God for the “nations” to either be told of His glory or to declare His glory⁹⁹. It appears that the nation of Israel misunderstood their calling as the chosen nation and took it to mean they were chosen to the exclusion of all other nations. There is an even greater emphasis made in the New Testament to the good news of God’s salvation going out to the “nations.”¹⁰⁰ It is clearly God’s desire for His gospel to be taken to all people so that His purposes may be realized.

⁹⁸ Jn 12:32.

⁹⁹ 1 Chr 16:8, 23,24; Ps 46:10; 67; 86:9; 96:3; Is 49:6; 66:19.

¹⁰⁰ Mt 28:19,20; Ac 1:8; Rom 16:26; Rv 5:9; 7:9.

Antioch – A Biblical Model

The three short verses in Acts 13 that describe the call and commissioning of Barnabas and Saul are so rich in information they have inspired many individuals and churches to the work of missions. There is also much to be mined for our purposes in seeing how God sends out individuals from a local church.

The first thing that becomes apparent in the roll call of leaders in the church at Antioch is the diversity of the men named. The leadership of this church was composed of “foreigners.” Not one of those named was from Antioch. At least one was probably a black-skinned North African. Both Barnabas and Manaen seem to have been from wealthy backgrounds, but Paul was a tentmaker. There is even a distinction made that some were prophets (Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius) and some teachers (Manaen, Saul).¹⁰¹

Secondly, the fact that God would call out 40% of a church’s leaders for missions should be significant. Doubtless, the church was able to replenish its leadership deficit by training others to take the places of the missionaries, but it would most likely have taken some time. These were men that the church had expected to give them the kind of teaching and equipping they knew they would need in order to serve Christ effectively.

Thirdly, the willingness of the church to be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit is to be much admired. The church is seen fasting and worshiping in this passage. That allows the Holy Spirit to make Himself known to them. Then as He

¹⁰¹ Robertson, vol. 3, 177. See also Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 9: 416.

calls out Barnabas and Saul, the church acts immediately to obey. There is no sign here of any kind of hesitation to send out the best the congregation has to offer.

While most of us point to this passage as an example of the local church sending out workers into the harvest, others see something a little different. Jack Chapin sees in the choice of Greek verbs used in verses 1-4 as more of a separation of the workers from the congregation than of a sending out of the workers.¹⁰² He thinks this was a permanent separation of these men from the local body of believers as reflected in the word ἀπελυσαν, which carries more the sense of “released,” rather than “sent out” in the apostolic sense.

Regardless of how one interprets this passage, it is clear that the church at Antioch did what God commanded them to do. They set these men apart and laid hands on them even though that meant losing a significant part of their leadership team. They may never have appreciated the enormity of their actions, but we are able today to see how the world was affected by their obedience. They also could not have known that they would serve as a model for other churches desiring to be obedient to God’s call for workers to enter the fields “that are white unto harvest.”¹⁰³

A Justification of Sending Agencies

Our primary source of information about the missionary nature of the primitive Church is the book of Acts. It is a tremendous resource because it covers a wide range of geography as well as chronology. Additionally, it was written as a

¹⁰² Jack Chapin, “The Sender: Local Church and Mission Agency – What is the best relationship?” *Mission Frontiers* 20, no. 1 (1998): 32-35. See also Kittel, vol. 4, 328.

¹⁰³ Jn 4:35.

historical account (unlike the epistles, which also provide us with valuable information about the same time frame and geography). So, we often find ourselves delving into the book of Acts in order to discover what the strategies were of the early Church leaders, and to find biblical bases for our own strategies. Paul Hiebert states that missiological theology is “the application of divine revelation to human contexts.”¹⁰⁴ Applying divine revelation to human contexts is what we see the early Church leaders doing in the book of Acts, and it is what we find ourselves doing today on the mission field.

We must bear in mind, however, that the book of Acts was written in a time of transition, and in some ways may not be directly applicable to our situation today. It is well worth noting that strategies were being developed possibly without any precedents to guide the strategists. When the circumstances in which we find ourselves today are similar to those of the early church, the strategies they chose may be appropriated by us for our use today. But when our circumstances vary greatly from those of the early church, it may be absolutely necessary for us to develop new strategies that take into account our actual circumstances. Some of the current contexts may have no biblical precedent to use as a guide in making missiological decisions because of the change in circumstances. Other areas are open to interpretation.

One such area that is open to interpretation is that of agency. Is there a biblical precedent for sodalities, or what some have referred to as “parachurch”

¹⁰⁴ Paul Hiebert, “Spiritual Warfare and Worldview.” *Global Missiology for the 21st Century*, ed. William D. Taylor (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 164.

organizations? Some argue that mission sending agencies are one arm of the Church, and that the local congregation is another arm of that same Church.¹⁰⁵ Others might argue that Jesus only instituted the Church, and that all forms of ministry and missions should be funneled through the Church. This chapter will show that the use of agencies is biblically sound, and that sending agencies enable the local church to fulfill the Great Commission.

Ralph D. Winter has written extensively on the two structures that exist in God's Kingdom on Earth. He has labeled these two structures "modalities" and "sodalities." A modality is "a structured fellowship in which there is no distinction of sex or age, while a sodality is a structured fellowship in which membership involves an adult second decision beyond modality membership, and is limited by either age or sex or marital status."¹⁰⁶ He is using these terms to generally mean the local church (modality) and any other kind of organization that cannot be strictly defined as a congregation (sodality). Included in this latter group would be educational institutions, religious orders, Bible translation organizations, and sending agencies.

There is a belief by some Christians that the local church (or in some cases a denomination) should be the only body sending missionaries. Some may see Jesus' institution of the Church in Matthew 16 as the only legitimate form in which the body of Christ exists. Anything that cannot be called a "church" is not a legitimate expression of God's plan for His people. The use of the term "parachurch" to

¹⁰⁵ Joseph and Michelle C., "Field Governed Mission Structures in the Bible and Throughout the Centuries," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 18:2 (April-June 2001): 59-66.

¹⁰⁶ Winter, 6.

describe an organization implies this understanding since it identifies these organizations as “not Church.”

Others, however, see any kind of expression of God’s body actively involved in living out the Christian faith as being legitimate. This perspective sees the Church as a multifaceted organization with local congregations being one facet of the entirety. Among this group would be some who see the sodality as being equal to the local congregation in authority to send out missionaries because both are “Church.”

Between these two extremes is a broad range of possible relationships between modalities and sodalities. Ralph D. Winter falls within this range when he suggests that sodalities be regulated, but not administered by, modalities. Within my own sending agency I can see the tension between trying to keep the modalities placated while realizing that they are generally ignorant of the realities of cross-cultural missions and may want to insist on very unrealistic approaches and/or policies.

The typical Baptist church in the United States is not capable of administering a missionary corps overseas in spite of all the available resources. Most churches are unable to give the kind of time and effort needed to maintain and supervise missionaries, even if they have the desire and even the financial resources to do so. “The historical record is that mission families sent out by a single congregation are rarely as likely to get the best preparation before going to the field

or the valuable guidance and fellowship of other missionaries after they get there.”¹⁰⁷

Imagine, then, a small Baptist church in Latin America with much more limited experience and resources trying to administer a cross-cultural mission effort by itself. There is a tendency to emphasize the recruitment and sending of the missionaries, and the training, maintenance, and pastoral care are overlooked or underemphasized. More will be said about this in chapter four when I describe the individual areas that a sending agency needs to consider before sending missionaries.

So, what does the Bible say about sodalities? Keeping in mind that the first century A.D. was a time of initiation and transition for the Church, and that organizational structures would take some time to develop, what can we glean from our New Testament sources?

We must begin by analyzing the Church that Jesus Christ instituted in Matthew chapter 16. Was He envisioning a body of local congregations that were self-contained with Himself as the head, or was He envisioning something more complete and integrated such as a multifaceted body that had diverse functions? If the former, then each self-contained congregation would be expected to do every function of a church, including sending out workers in an Acts 1:8 fashion. If the latter, then the image of the Body of Christ as a diverse body such as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12 that has non-interchangeable parts has room for many sodalities. Just as an elbow is unique in its structure and purpose, so would one type of sodality be unique from the rest of the body parts, be they modalities or sodalities.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.,14.

There is general agreement among scholars that the New Testament Church took as its organizational model the synagogue. We know from Jesus' teaching that there was a missionary tendency among the Pharisees to "travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte."¹⁰⁸ A.T. Robertson says that this was more of a conversion to Pharisaism than to Judaism.¹⁰⁹ These efforts, then, would have been by the party of Pharisees, and not by the synagogue. This would mean a *de facto* sodality within the synagogue structure.

Winter argues that very early in the life of the Church there arose a natural extension of the modalities that was regulated by the church, but not administered by it.¹¹⁰ Since there is no direct statement in the New Testament about agencies, we must look at the attitudes of the apostles and other New Testament church leaders for guidance. We must also look for signs of cooperation, which is the basis for societies and agencies.

Warren W. Webster claims that "early in the New Testament we find embryonic mission structures functioning alongside local church assemblies."¹¹¹ While not everyone would agree that they see 'embryonic mission structures' in the New Testament, it is clear that Paul and his disciples were making strategic decisions about when and where to share the gospel without consulting the Antioch church. If Ruth Siemens is correct in saying that while Paul concentrated his attention on the cities, he sent out new believers to the outlying towns and villages,

¹⁰⁸ Mt 23:15.

¹⁰⁹ Robertson, vol. 1, 182.

¹¹⁰ Winter, 13.

¹¹¹ Warren W. Webster, "The Messenger and Mission Societies," *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 764.

then we are able to see Paul and his team functioning as a mission society if not a missionary sending agency.¹¹²

Because of the nature of the New Testament in telling of the coming of the messiah and his teachings, and then of the resultant early church, there is very little material related to either the structure of the local church or that of the universal church. However, this lack of detail does not leave us clueless to the nature of the Church that Jesus Christ founded and that the apostles propagated. We see throughout the New Testament certain threads that need to be spun together in order to recognize what the 21st Century Church should look like.

One such thread is that of the use of words such as “koine” and “koinonia,” that is, having to do with community and having things in common. If there is anything we have in common, it is our salvation in Jesus Christ. That is the cord that binds us as a catholic Church. Within that Church, we are all members of one body. Those body parts are interdependent upon one another, and usually work together to accomplish a task. An excellent example of this interdependence is a trans-denominational sending organization that focuses on that commonality in working toward specific goals.

A second thread that winds its way through the New Testament (especially the epistles) and that binds us together is that of submission to one another. As one who comes from a congregational background, I have to say that the thought of a hierarchical structure to the Church is abhorrent. There is, however, a middle ground that is often overlooked in the rush to describe things as either/or. That

¹¹² Siemens, 127.

middle ground requires the kind of humility and submission that the New Testament specifies, but allows for each local body of believers, acting as priests, to live out Christ's commands in their own cultural milieu.

An example of this submission is seen after the Jerusalem Council. First of all, the council's decision seems intended to be binding on the entire Church. Secondly, the apostle Paul then proceeds to travel back through the areas where he and Barnabas had planted churches, and delivers the "decrees" or "rules" (δόγμα) "which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem." The apostles seem to have assumed that the churches would submit to the imposition of these decrees.

The catholic Church, then, is a single society of the redeemed. We see examples in the New Testament of various churches working together; this cooperation is the third thread. We have, first of all, the example of the disciples who were sent out to work in teams or societies of two.¹¹³ There is also the example of the Macedonian church supporting the missionary Paul while he worked among another congregation.¹¹⁴ And in the collection for the saints in Jerusalem we see in 2 Cor 8:19 that Titus had been "appointed by the churches" to take the offering to Jerusalem and that this group of individuals was acting as "messengers [literally "apostles"] of the churches."¹¹⁵ These examples of cooperation in missions and ministry ought to be sufficient to convince us that we are to work together to fulfill Christ's commands.

¹¹³ Mt 10:5ff; Lk 10:1ff.

¹¹⁴ 2 Cor 11.

¹¹⁵ 2 Cor 8:23.

Whereas the primitive Church was too young to need any “agencies” or “societies” to fulfill its mission, we do see the bases for such cooperation in Ac 6:1-6 when the apostles had the believers choose agents (διάκονοι) to be responsible for the financial expenditure and/or daily service of the food.¹¹⁶ Likewise, the appointment of Titus as the agent for delivering the collection to Jerusalem serves as an example of the nascent idea of agency in the New Testament Church. In the same verse, Paul says he and others are “administering” the gift. This, too, supports the idea of agency since Paul would not have been working from the position of an elder, but from that of a missionary.

In fact, some see within Barnabas and Paul’s activities after their commissioning by the Antioch church the development of “semiautonomous mission teams.”¹¹⁷ These teams were acting out of the initial sending of the church, but their strategies and policies appear to have been determined by the team members, and not by the Antioch church.

It is interesting to note that Paul unilaterally sent workers from one place to another.¹¹⁸ They were not sent by a local church, but by the apostle Paul in what Warren W. Webster calls “Pauline bands.”¹¹⁹ There is a sense of agency here in that Paul apparently takes it upon himself to make these decisions, then sends the individuals, then expects reports from them about the progress of the work. He does not, however, seek authorization from any church or authority.

¹¹⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Whole Bible*, “Acts” vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973) 34.

¹¹⁷ Allan Matamoros, *¿Por que y para que sirven las estructuras misioneras de envio?* www.geocities.com/movilizacionmisionera/ParaQueSirven.doc, November 18, 2003

¹¹⁸ Ac 19:22; 2 Tm 4:12; Tit 3:12.

¹¹⁹ Webster, 764.

The unique characteristic of the gospel to adapt to different cultures also lends itself very much to the development of sodalities within the Church body. As the gospel moved into new geographical and cultural areas, it needed to adapt to both the circumstances and the new opportunities that arose. Sodalities, by their nature, are often much more flexible and mobile than modalities. So, the development by Paul and others of sodalities that were able to respond quickly to opportunities should not surprise us.

C. Peter Wagner saw four phases of this missionary evolution. In the first phase the expatriate missionaries evangelized and planted churches. In the second phase they did “church development.” The third phase has the mission agency and the missionaries acting as consultants for the new national church. In many cases this becomes the end of the evolutionary process of missions development in the new national church. The fourth phase that Wagner perceived as needing to happen was when the national church became able to launch its own mission agency. He said, “When the missionary vision reaches only as far as phase three, it is myopic.”¹²⁰ The truth of these statements is being borne out before my eyes in both Honduras and Panama.

We can see these four phases in the ministry of Paul. He and Barnabas did the first phase themselves as they evangelized and planted churches. Then Paul proposed a trip with Barnabas to revisit the churches to see how they were doing. After the breakup of one sodality into two, Paul and Silas traveled “through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”¹²¹ This fits neatly into the second, or

¹²⁰ Wagner, 176-177.

¹²¹ Ac 15:41.

church development, phase. The third phase, that of consultancy, can clearly be seen in Paul's epistles. He was giving guidance to the very churches that he had planted and developed, as well as to pastors such as Timothy and Titus.

The fourth phase, that of creating missions sodalities, is evident in the 'Pauline bands' referred to earlier that were sent out by the apostle to begin the four phases of missionary evolution in other areas. These other areas may have included the smaller towns and villages that Paul did not enter into personally, but which Luke was able to include when he said that "all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord."¹²²

This fourth phase also corresponds with what could be called an addendum to the "three-self" nature of the Church as proposed by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn. The first three "selves" are self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. A fourth self that has been proposed is that of "self-theologizing." The fifth "self" which relates to Wagner's fourth phase of missionary evolution is "self-missionizing." Such 'self missionizing' is evidence of spiritual maturity. It is exactly what one would expect to see of a healthy church.

These four phases Wagner identifies and five "selves" that others recognize as part of the history (and future) of the Church are certainly characteristic of a gospel message that is intended to adapt to different circumstances; they are not characteristic of a static, monolithic institutional Church, however. Winter perceives the New Testament showing us "how to borrow effective patterns" when the gospel is taken into new cultural situations.¹²³

¹²² Ac 19:10.

¹²³ Winter, 3.

The development of the Church's missionary vision, especially in Honduras and other Latin American countries, has been evolutionary. It appears that somehow there was a dichotomy created between the work of the Church in the sending nations, and the work of the Church in the receiving nations. "Missions have seemed to be a necessary activity of the churches in the sending countries, but for some curious reason not too necessary in the emerging churches."¹²⁴

Winter argues that in addition to church planting, missionaries should have been starting sodalities, too. He is amazed that missionaries who have been sent and maintained by sodalities would so thoroughly ignore the need for sodalities in the new fields. He says "The marvelous 'Third World Mission' movement has sprung up from these mission field churches, but with embarrassingly little encouragement from the Western mission societies, as sad and surprising as that may seem."¹²⁵ The logical conclusion is that missionaries and mission agencies should be very concerned with helping national churches take the steps necessary to form sending agencies. It is imperative that the Church in Honduras recognize its need to be a sending Church as part of the *Missio Dei*.

We move now from a biblical basis for sodalities to a discussion of the relationship between modalities and sodalities. Because of the Bible's insistence on unity in the Body of Christ, the tensions that can arise between modalities and sodalities must be dealt with in order to attempt to maintain that unity. These tensions may tend to force each entity into rigid defensive positions about their

¹²⁴ Wagner, 177.

¹²⁵ Winter, 14.

authority and autonomy that do nothing to enhance the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

In fact, it has been suggested that the term “parachurch” should not be used because it “perpetuates a wrong ecclesiology and the view that legitimacy rests only with the local congregation.”¹²⁶ Proposed terminology includes “the church in local form” and “the church in mobile or mission form.”¹²⁷ Another author contributes “apostolic structures” as an alternative term.¹²⁸ Clearly, this proposal implies a diverse body perspective that treats both modality and sodality as equals within the Body of Christ.

There will almost certainly continue to be tension between those who see the pragmatism of sodalities (including trans-denominational structures) and who strive to enhance its effectiveness, and those who see any sodality as a threat to the work of the local church. Indeed, the latter may even vilify pragmatism as being unbiblical at best, and from the devil (or at least from the liberals) at worst. Robert A. Blincoe encourages a continuous evaluation process when he says, “Tension between the two [sodality and modality] is normative, but this is not to say that they work at cross-purposes.”¹²⁹

It is unfortunate that some see an adversarial relationship between churches and sending agencies when there should be a healthy cooperation between them.

¹²⁶ Samuel F. Metcalf, “When Local Churches Act Like Agencies,” *Mission Frontiers* 15, no. 7-8 (1993): 30.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ George Miley, “Seeking Initiation and Consolidation Among All Nations” *Mission Frontiers* 27, no. 3 (2005): 9.

¹²⁹ Robert A. Blincoe, “Still Two Structures After All These Years,” in *Mission Frontiers* 25, no. 3 (2003): 14.

Indeed, Winter prefers to see the relationship as “symbiotic” and one that invigorates both entities.¹³⁰

Paul Hiebert states that modality/sodality relationships tend to fall into three types of “social structures.” These vary in their support of the local church as the force behind missions. The first area is referred to as “Missions as Part of the Church” in which “mission work is seen as one of the tasks carried out by the church or denomination as a whole.” The second area is called “Missions as Distinct from the Church,” and sees missions “as an activity distinct from the normal tasks of the church.”

The third area is more of a “Mixed Mission Model” that blends aspects of the first two areas in attempting to arrive at a more effective approach. Here is where Winter’s distinction between how a modality can “regulate” but not “administer” contributes to the discussion. When these two structures do not see themselves as mutually exclusive, they can begin to relate to one another in healthy ways. The process of having modalities regulate sodalities while not administering them allows for the sodality to have enough flexibility and mobility to function well without being suffocated by micromanagement.¹³¹

Each of these three models has its inherent weaknesses. This observation by Hiebert of different mission models allows us to acknowledge that the relationship between the local church and the mission agency is one which needs to undergo continuous evaluation in order to maintain a healthy emphasis on the role of the local church in the missions endeavor whether that church is a sending church or a

¹³⁰ Winter, 7.

¹³¹ Ibid., 13.

receiving church.¹³² For now, all three of these models are being practiced by earnest people who desire to see the Great Commission realized. It is unlikely that the debate will be settled anytime soon.

In conclusion, it is evident to me that there is a biblical basis for sodalities as part of the Body of Christ. These organizations must be able to relate to the entire body in a healthy way. The fluidity, or flexibility, of the gospel message in diverse cultures allows it to take various forms in different times and places. The mobility of sodalities allows them to do things that modalities cannot do.

If the Honduran Baptists create a sodality now, it may need to look considerably different in just a few years. However, the time has arrived for Honduran Baptists to enter that fourth phase and to begin self-missionizing to the point of creating an indigenous sending agency. They have a biblical basis for doing so, and can also take advantage of the practical aspects of a sodality in fulfilling the Great Commission.

A Justification of Financial Support for Missionaries

It is unfortunate for our purposes that the New Testament does not give us the kind of detail that we would desire to have in regards to the financial relationships that evolved in the early church. At best, we can analyze isolated passages in the Gospels and Epistles, as well as the book of Acts, to try to deduce what might have been happening at the time of those writings.

¹³² Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 249-253.

It is interesting that the Great Commission as found in Matthew does not use the infinitive form of the verb “to go.” Rather, it is a participle that assumes that they *will be going* to the ends of the earth. Likewise, the Ac 1:8 passage does not include an imperative to go. It states that they *will be* His witnesses in those places, but without telling them to actually go there. It would appear that the Lord intended for the natural movement of individuals and families on the basis of economic and other motives to help spread the gospel around the world. There is a strong argument here for tent-making missions that combine the skills of Christians with the gifts of the Spirit to make disciples “as they are going.”

Let us begin by noting that in Lk 8:1-3 we see that there was a group of women who not only accompanied Jesus and the Twelve, but who also “were contributing to their support out of their private means.” (NASB) Such support doubtless formed the backbone of Jesus’ ability to travel with a large group of individuals for extended periods of time, and has been called “the first women’s missionary society for the support of missionaries of the gospel.”¹³³

Let us continue by analyzing the apostle Paul’s financial situation. We know that in addition to his theological training, he had the skill of making tents, which he had probably learned in his youth from his father.¹³⁴ At times he utilized this skill to support himself financially while preaching.¹³⁵ At other times, however, he accepted

¹³³ Robertson, volume 2, 111.

¹³⁴ Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, 131.

¹³⁵ Ac 18:3; 20:34; 1 Thes 2:9; 2 Thes 3:8.

the financial gifts of others in order to devote himself to the ministry.¹³⁶ While imprisoned in Rome he stayed in a rented home at someone else's expense.¹³⁷

The passage in 2 Corinthians 11 offers a challenge or two for us as we develop this theology of financial support for missionaries. First, we learn that Paul preached to the Corinthians "without charge" because he was being supported financially by other churches. However, he uses the phrase "I robbed other churches by taking wages" as if it were wrong to do so. The key to understanding this passage is the tone and the use of irony and sarcasm that Paul utilizes with the Corinthians. Paul is also employing hyperbole here.¹³⁸ He begins this passage in verse one of chapter 11 by saying "I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness."

In numerous places, Paul defends his decision to support himself¹³⁹ while in other places he defends the payment of a salary to a worker of the gospel.¹⁴⁰ He actually does both at the same time in 1 Cor 9:3-14. He makes it clear that he was entitled to receive financial support from the Corinthians, but he did not do so in order not to hinder the gospel. He also makes it clear in verse 14 that it is appropriate for "those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. (NASB)"

One interesting passage is Ac 18:5 where we see that "Paul began devoting himself completely to the word" when "Silas and Timothy came down from

¹³⁶ Ac 18:5; Phil 4:15,16; 2 Cor 11:7-9.

¹³⁷ Ac 28:30.

¹³⁸ Siemens, 123.

¹³⁹ Ac 20:34,35; 1 Cor 9:18; 1 Thes 2:9; 2 Thes 3:8.

¹⁴⁰ 1 Cor 9:7-14; 1 Tm 5:17,18.

Macedonia.” This implies a financial support from some outside source. Either Silas and Timothy worked so that Paul wouldn’t have to, or else they brought some sort of support with them when they came from Macedonia. This may have been the support Paul refers to in Phil 4:15ff. Either way, Paul was able to focus on preaching. This brings to mind Ac 6:2,4 when the apostles stopped serving the daily meals and dedicated themselves “to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

His intentions while with the Corinthians may have been “partly that he might not be burdensome to the churches, and partly that his motives as a minister of Christ might not be liable to misconstruction.”¹⁴¹ Paul was obviously concerned about the appearance of evil and its effect on his testimony and ministry. He wanted “nothing to diminish the credibility of his message or his motivation or to interfere with his adapting to the people he wanted to reach.”¹⁴²

Later we see that Paul considers it important when addressing the elders/bishops of Ephesus during his stop in Miletus (Ac 20:33-35) to remind them of how he modeled independence by working with his own hands to minister to his own needs and to those of the men who were with him (likewise in 2 Thes 3:7-13). He was encouraging these elders/bishops to do the same. In exhorting them to share with others (“It is more blessed to give than to receive”), he is encouraging them to financially support “the weak.”

On the one hand Paul expresses support for giving financial aid to those who are in need, but at the same time he stresses that he modeled independence to them while he was on the mission field. The implication seems to be that whenever

¹⁴¹ Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, 131.

¹⁴² Siemens, 123.

possible one should make an effort to be independent (perhaps so that one can afford to give to others as implied in 2 Cor 9:8), but that it is all right to receive assistance on other occasions. The question of the length of time one ought to receive such assistance may depend on particular circumstances.

Jonatán Lewis says it succinctly when he states “Paul had various reasons for working with his hands while he testified to the Lord. Supporting himself economically, avoiding criticism, and providing an example are the most prominent reasons. These reasons are still valid for modern tentmakers. We add to all these reasons what is for today of great importance: providing a creative access to those countries where entrance is difficult.”¹⁴³

In addition to our example of Paul, we also have Peter whose ministry appears to have been entirely paid for by supporters after the Day of Pentecost.

The president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. Jerry Rankin, has stated on many occasions that “the resources are in the harvest.” From an agricultural standpoint this is certainly true. The seed for the succeeding year’s planting comes from the previous year’s harvest. In the area of missions, there may be a practical application of this lesson as well. Just as Paul did not want to be a hindrance to the acceptance of the gospel by his listeners, a missionary to a pioneer area would not want to begin “charging” for his efforts from the first fruits of his harvest. However, as the church grows and begins to take responsibility for itself, it may also want to support the continued work in other areas of the missionary who originally brought the gospel to that area.

¹⁴³ Jonatán Lewis, ed., *Trabajando Tu Llamado a Las Naciones* (Miami: Editorial Unilit, 1998), 27.

One biblical example of this idea of the resources being in the harvest can be found in Ac 28:8-10. After Paul had healed Publius' father and many others on the island of Malta, they were sent on their way with an abundance of supplies. Another example is found in 3 Jn 7,8 where Gaius is told that the missionaries he was hosting had not seen fit to charge "the Gentiles." This may mean the new believers with whom they had been working. This would concord with Paul's attitude in Corinth. John was, however, encouraging Gaius to support these missionaries "in a manner worthy of God," probably because he was a mature Christian.

There is a temptation on the part of many who are desirous of serving God in cross-cultural missions to simply throw themselves into the fray and trust God to provide for their every need. In fact, there is an element in Latin American Evangelical Christianity that sees that attitude as infinitely more spiritual than any kind of planning and organization. There is even apparent Scriptural support in Jesus' command to the disciples not to take a purse with them on their missionary travels. However, that short-term mission trip was among the disciples' own cultural and language group, and they would receive "support" (most likely food and drink) from those who were open to their preaching. There is nothing in the passage that indicates that the proscription of financial planning for missions is to be universal in its application.

Another approach to the financing of missionaries is called "faith-based" support. This approach is used by most missionaries and is probably considered to be the norm. As a person begins to obey God's call to missions, he begins to network with individuals and churches that may be interested in supporting him and

his ministry. He may speak in many churches and receive little or no financial assistance. Over a period of time he will have attained either initial support or promises of support for a certain amount to begin at some future point when he has raised enough support to leave for the field. This process of deputation varies from a few weeks to more than a year depending on the individual's ability to convince churches and individuals to support him.

This is the approach that has been most effective for Latin American Baptists. It will probably continue to be the most effective means of financing cross-cultural missions for the foreseeable future. Without a strong, broad denominational structure on which to depend for missions funding, the Cooperative Program approach is not feasible for Latin American Baptist. At some point in the future it may become possible and desirable to have such a funding option.

One weakness to the faith-based approach is that the pledged support may be discontinued or may fluctuate to the point that the missionary has to return home frequently in order to keep his financial support firm enough so as not to affect his ministry. Of course, such travel home from the field is both time-consuming and expensive. It also may occur at a time when the missionary or his family is most vulnerable to the temptation to return home due to the frustrations of adapting to the new culture or from a lack of visible success.

Another dynamic to the issue of the financial support of missionaries can be found in Paul's statements that God will bless those who support missions. There are numerous Old Testament passages that mention the rewards of tithing, but even in the New Testament we see such promises.

Paul states in Phil 4:17 that he is not seeking anything for himself, but that he is seeking “the profit [literally “fruit”] which increases to your account.” Then in verse 19, after once again recognizing their gift to him, he promises that “God will supply all [their] needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” He also tells the Corinthians in a section about the financial support of missionaries that “he who sows bountifully [literally “with blessings”] will also reap bountifully [“with blessings”].¹⁴⁴ Continuing the agricultural imagery, he says in verses 10 and 11 of 2 Corinthians 9 that “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and *multiply* your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness [italics mine].” Paul’s overall tone whenever he speaks of giving to missions is one that implies that there is a direct correlation between giving to missions and God’s blessings.

A Justification of an Indigenous Sending Agency

The argument has been made for the creation of a sending agency for Honduran Baptists. The natural tendency for both the Hondurans and any non-Honduran missionaries desiring to help them create their own sending agency would be to copy the missionaries’ sending agency or for the missionaries to impose their own mission culture on the Hondurans. This, in fact, would probably have been the case if the Hondurans had expressed an interest in creating a sending agency during the initial stages of their growth as a convention. The missionaries would have been flattered to have had “their children” imitate them, and the Hondurans would have had a sending agency just like the one the missionaries had.

¹⁴⁴ 2 Cor 9:6.

Ralph D. Winter points out that for some reason most missionaries only think about forming modalities, but not sodalities in spite of the fact that they are working within the structure of a sodality.¹⁴⁵ In this case, it may be a good thing for Honduran Baptists that the missionaries did not encourage them to create a sending agency, although it has kept them from having a global missions focus all these years.

So, when dealing with the issue of the creation of sending agency, the question must be asked, “What kind of sending agency should the Honduran Baptists create?” The answer must be “They must create a sending agency that reflects their cultural realities. It must be indigenous.”

The first step then, is to determine what the Bible has to say about indigeneity. While it does not speak directly to the issue of indigenous sodalities, there are certain threads that weave a pattern of indigeneity as part of God’s plan for the nations.

The apostle Paul, in writing to the Church at Philippi, describes the humility of Christ in pouring himself out in order take human form. The Incarnation of Christ is a foundational aspect of the gospel message. That God came to earth in human form and lived among man in order to most effectively bring the entire gospel message to man, is what makes the gospel so compelling. Instead of sending a messenger, perhaps one who was already comfortable in the cultural realities of that time, God chose to send His Son. He did not send him as he was; He sent him so that he could fit in with the people to whom he had been sent.

¹⁴⁵ Winter, 14.

The Incarnation of Christ is the indigeneity of the gospel message. It made the gospel a part of the very culture to which it was sent. First it fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, thus utilizing the forms and meanings of the people to whom it was sent in order to make it more intelligible. Then it gave that prophecy even deeper meaning and used the symbols of that culture to touch their hearts. The Incarnation of Christ took on the characteristics of the culture to which it was sent and became indigenous to that culture.

While there may have been a foreignness about Jesus due to His spiritual nature and His holiness, for the most part He was wholly Palestinian Jew in His enculturation. He spoke the language and practiced the customs of the people. He lived among the people and blended in with them to the degree that we have no physical description of Him because of His sameness to those around Him.

An effective sodality must fit as comfortably into the culture of its creators as the Creator did into His creation. It must look and sound as much at home as Jesus must have looked and sounded at home in a human body. When the sodality achieves this level of indigeneity, it becomes as effective at fulfilling its purpose as Jesus did His.

As if it was not enough to make the gospel message indigenous to the culture of the Jews, God's chosen instrument through which He would bless the world, He also made it clear that the gospel could become indigenous in other cultures. He did this first by having the Spirit-filled apostles speak in other languages on the Day of Pentecost. This special event was intended in part to display the universal character of the gospel. By allowing the gospel to be preached in other languages, God

showed that the message was not just for one language, one culture, or one people. The gospel could take on the characteristics of other cultures. This special event, however, was only the first step in helping Jesus' followers understand this principle.

Since it was (and still is) such a radical concept, it required a certain amount of time and distance to allow the concept of a gospel for all nations to seep into the heart as well as the head of the disciples. After several significant events in which non-Jews were made disciples of Christ, the issue came to a head at the Council of Jerusalem as described in Acts 15 by Luke. It was at this council where the apostles and elders decided that while the gospel had easily fit into the culture of Judaism, it was not limited to that culture. Other cultures, too, could be touched forever by the gospel message. The disciples discovered that one group's cultural reality is not necessarily that of another culture, but that the same gospel is for both cultures.

It is significant that as the early Church leaders were grappling with the cross-cultural adaptability of the gospel, they were able to recognize the need not to impose their own cultural reality on others. The practical aspect of this is that the apostles and elders in Jerusalem did not interfere with the on-field strategy decisions made by the early missionaries who were taking the gospel to non-Jewish audiences.¹⁴⁶ This early decision allowed the early missionary bands to adapt the gospel to the cultures to which they were sent without having to preach a "foreign" gospel.

¹⁴⁶ Pate, 378.

When Paul spoke to non-Jewish audiences he did not have to make references to the Old Testament prophecies and then explain those prophecies. He was able to tailor the gospel to his audience. One example is when he preached in Athens (Acts 17) and quoted their own poets in order to make the gospel more culturally relevant to them. This strategic decision was predicated on the indigeneity of the gospel to all cultures.

Not only was the gospel itself indigenous to all cultures, but the missionary sending structures that developed over time also became indigenous to their cultures. As the leader of a missionary society, Paul was giving us a rudimentary introduction to the need for any sodality to be indigenous.

To emphasize this important concept, Paul gave us insight into his *modus operandi* as a missionary and mission society leader when he told the Corinthians that he adapted himself and his message to the situation in which he found himself. He was able to say that he had “become all things to all men, so that [he] may by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22). This motto would serve him well as he continued to lead and send workers into more and more distant regions.

As Paul traveled on his missionary journeys, and as he sent workers to other areas, he utilized this characteristic of the gospel to adapt itself to any culture in order to reach people with the gospel. As he ventured into Europe after having received the “Macedonian Call,” he changed his approach and met with a group of women, possibly all Jewish proselytes, outside the city gates and not in the synagogue (it is unclear if there was a synagogue in Philippi at that time), as had been his custom in the east. Whereas he probably would never have met with a

group of women in the Levant or Asia Minor, he was able to adapt to the cultural situation of a new land. Apparently there was greater freedom for women in this region than was enjoyed by women in other areas.¹⁴⁷ Paul was more in tune with the leading of the Holy Spirit than with his own cultural preferences and habits.

If the first step was to discover what the Bible says about indigeneity, the second step is to ask what there is about the Honduran culture that requires a sending agency that differs from those of its neighbors, including the United States. In the case of the United States, the cultural differences are immense. The United States is an extremely wealthy nation that prides itself on having proven that the Protestant work ethic allowed it to overcome all obstacles in its march to greatness. Honduras, on the other hand, is generally considered to be the second-poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Its Roman Catholic majority practices a fatalistic view of life that interprets everything as being God's will, including their poverty.

Partly because of that fatalistic worldview, Hondurans in general are not good at long-range planning and the accompanying action plans. If everything rests in God's hands, why would anyone try to plan for the future? This one characteristic of the culture is sufficient to distinguish between the hyper-organized North American sending agencies, and the hypo-organized Hondurans.

Hondurans share many characteristics with their nearest Latin American neighbors. Much of the history, culture, and religion of these countries are identical. However, even in the general populace there are differences between the various countries. Especially when we begin to look specifically at the Baptists in these countries do we see that not only are their histories different, but their individual

¹⁴⁷ Robertson, vol. 3, 251.

cultures are surprisingly different, and the roles they play in their respective countries are different.

While the Honduran Baptists would certainly benefit from analyzing any sending agencies from their neighboring countries, they would need to perceive the areas where their reality differs from that of their neighbors. If these areas of difference are ignored, there could be long-term consequences such as those outlined earlier in chapter one in the section dealing with the dangers of non-indigeneity.

Before ending this section on indigenous sending agencies, it is important to distinguish between the creation of an indigenous sending agency by a denomination in the Two-Thirds World, and what has in the past several years come to be known as “Indigenous Missions.” This latter concept derives its name from the idea that nationals are better able to evangelize and do missions than are outsiders, that is, foreign missionaries.

There are fascinating Missiological questions related to the issues raised by those who promote such “indigenous missions,” but the key point to be made in this particular thesis is that most often the proponents of this concept have in mind missionaries from the northern and western areas such as the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. They seldom deal with the issue of Two-Thirds World missionaries entering into foreign missions. The argument that a maturing Church needs to have a global missions emphasis in order to reach its full potential is never addressed by them and actually seems not to have ever been considered.

Some of their arguments against the sending of missionaries are undermined by the nature of those who are sent by Two-Thirds World churches. The financial

(which really seems to be the fundamental issue) and cultural reasons for not sending foreign missionaries are often negated by the sending of Two-Thirds World missionaries.

Conclusion

There is ample evidence in the New Testament that God intends for His Church to follow His example: He sent His Son, then God and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, now the Trinity sends us into the world to continue to carry God's message of redemption "to all the world." He calls individuals to cross cultural barriers in order to ensure that "all nations" or all people groups have the opportunity to hear the gospel in their heart languages, but He uses individual churches and groups of churches to be the sending force. The very nature of the gospel message is one of going, whether by the Savior, or by those who have already been confronted with, and changed by, God's good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Additionally, God provides for those who are fulfilling His Great Commission by utilizing the resources He has given to individual Christians. In all cases He is drawing the resources from the harvest, but in some cases He may provide by drawing the resources from the local, recent harvest. Those who support missions are blessed by God for doing so.

Clearly, there is sufficient biblical support for Honduran Baptists to work together to send workers into the harvest. They must find culturally appropriate ways that do not contradict Scripture to work together and to financially support those they send. There is much more they must be prepared to do, and that is the

purpose for the remainder of this thesis. We will see what else Honduran Baptists need to prepare for in order to send cross-cultural missionaries now that they have a justification of agency, and a justification of indigenous agency, as well as a justification of financial support.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is unanimous assent in the Evangelical community for the concept of Two-Thirds World missions. Some writers point to the trends in missions since the 1960s that have contributed to the realization of Two-Thirds World missions. Other writers address individual issues related to the creation of indigenous sending agencies. Still others write enthusiastically about the participation of Latin Americans in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, both present and future. But very few writers address how a group should go about creating a sending agency, especially from a denominational standpoint.

A considerable body of literature is available on the theme of Latin Americans and cross-cultural missions, but not a great deal of it is helpful for the actual creation of an indigenous sending agency. There are, however, different areas that are written about in the overall theme of cross-cultural missions that can be utilized to assist in preparing for the creation of an indigenous sending agency.

The amount of research and information related to the topic of the creation of indigenous sending agencies is disappointingly small. Perhaps in the next several years this will change, but it appears that there is a need for such information to be made available to Latin Americans immediately. Indigenous sending agencies will be created by churches, associations, and denominations over the next several years

that could greatly benefit from having access to materials that provide basic explanations of how to go about creating such an agency. The experiences of those who have already pioneered the creation process need to be shared with others for the purposes of encouragement and enlightenment.

Even within the historical sending countries there is a dearth of materials that explain the process. A good example of a historical account of the creation of a sending organization can be found in John Rowell's book *Magnify Your Vision for the Small Church*. While the "sending organization" Rowell's church created will not bear anything in common with an indigenous Latin American denominational sending agency, the recounting of the experiences is of value. These are the kinds of stories that need to be shared on a wider scale both by and for Latin Americans.

The only resource found that was similar in scope to this doctoral thesis was a book by Denis Lane entitled *La Administración Eficaz de Una Agencia de Envío* (The Efficient Administration of a Sending Agency). This book deals with many of the same issues as the manual that I created for Honduran Baptists to utilize in the creation of their sending agency. The Hondurans should read this particular book as they wrestle with some of these issues. It does not delve deeply into most of the subjects, but it does provide a good introduction in Spanish to the pertinent issues. Both the Spanish and English versions can be accessed on the Internet and either downloaded or printed.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Available at www.missionarytraining.org.

General Missiology

There are many resources that relate to general missiology that include statements about the Two-Thirds World involvement in cross-cultural missions. Some of these resources are located on the Internet and tend to be more recent than most of the print resources.¹⁴⁹ Some of these print and Internet-based resources were utilized in the course of this thesis project to get an overview of the issues involved in cross-cultural missions as a whole as well as of those issues related specifically to Latin Americans in cross-cultural missions. These resources are limited in the assistance they can lend toward the creation of a sending agency.

Several Latin American pastors who have become interested and involved in cross-cultural missions over the past two decades have begun to produce excellent writings on the role of Latin Americans in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. One such writer is Federico Bertuzzi from Argentina. At last count he had published three books, and had edited two others in addition to having written numerous articles on issues related to Missiology. His writings cover a wide range of topics that are pertinent to indigenous sending agencies, and that has contributed to his recognition as a leading Latin American Missiologist.

He is joined by Edison Queiroz, a Brazilian Baptist pastor (who pastors in Peru at present) who is also quite eloquent in his pleas for the local church to become more involved in the sending of missionaries to other cultures and lands. Edison Queiroz is a frequent speaker at mobilization conferences, and he spoke to

¹⁴⁹ See the Abel Morales and Allan Matamoros articles in the bibliography.

the Honduran Baptist leaders in the fall of 2001, but was unable to motivate them to action at that time.

Another Latin American writer who is able to utilize his own missionary experiences in writing about missiology (although mostly in English) is Samuel Escobar. In addition to having served as a missionary to Spain, he has been able to travel extensively and has observed how missionaries are confronting the challenges they encounter. He will doubtless continue to contribute to the literature on the mobilization of Latin Americans to the cross-cultural mission field.

One benefit of these men's writings is that they emphasize the biblical underpinnings of a healthy focus on missions by the local church. This is what is needed to motivate and inspire Latin Americans to look outside of their local contexts and to have a vision for fulfilling the Ac 1:8 mandate. Latin American pastors need to read such biblically based challenges written by other Latin American pastors who have been successful in working in both the local context and a wider, cross-cultural context.

These Latin American pastors-turned-mobilizers are joined by several renowned North Americans who were born and raised in Latin America as the sons of missionaries and who now write extensively on missions subjects. Two of these are William D. (Guillermo in Spanish publications) Taylor, and Jonathan (Jonatán in Spanish) Lewis. Both are recognized by Latin American pastors as being as much a part of the Latin American culture as they are North Americans and both contribute greatly to the mobilization of Latin Americans to cross-cultural missions.

In an even more general way, the general missiological writings of C. René Padilla and Orlando E. Costas are beneficial for giving Latin Americans an overview of some of the most pertinent issues that the missionary church faces. Both writers have written in Spanish and write from Latin American perspectives. While Costas' materials are considerably dated, they still address important missiological issues that aspiring missionaries would want to understand.

Other general missiologists such as Herbert J. Kane, David J. Bosch, David Hesselgrave, Eugene Nida, Paul Hiebert, A.B. Bruce, Sydney Lingenfelter, and even J. Verkuyl (though more dated than the others) give a basis for an understanding of important missiological principles. While only Paul Hiebert has been extensively translated into Spanish, the Hondurans who desire to be well read in general missiology would do well to read these authors as well as those who write specifically for the Latin American reader.

Practical Missiology

A second area of resources includes the practical aspects of sending missionaries of any type: the calling of the missionary, the training of the missionary, and the care of the missionary. These resources are of much interest for the Hondurans who desire to create a sending agency since they offer guidance on the most fundamental areas of a sending agency's work. Fortunately, many of these resources exist in Spanish.

An indispensable book for any Latin American interested in the specifics of sending Latin American missionaries across cultural barriers is *Misionología* by

Larry D. Pate. This book so impressed me I bought a copy to be shared among pastors and others who might be interested in sending cross-cultural missionaries. I also included numerous chapters in the reading assignments for the Missions class I taught at the Panamanian Baptist Seminary.

For the person who is beginning to sense a call to missions, there is an outstanding workbook edited by Jonatán Lewis entitled *Trabajando Tu Llamado a Las Naciones*. The focus of this workbook is on the tentmaker, but it deals so well with so many issues, it should be considered by anyone feeling called into cross-cultural missions. Its numerous self-tests can be valuable tools for the evaluation of one's abilities, temperament, and spiritual development. The Spanish version is a culturally appropriate revision of the original English version.

Another important book in the area of Practical Missiology is *Las Misiones Mundiales* by Guillermo D. Taylor and Eugenia Campos. This book is highly recommended for the local church missions committee and correlates well with the workshop I have presented on numerous occasions related to the role of the missions committee of the local church (see Appendices C and D). Closely aligned to the Taylor and Campos book is a valuable little handbook called *Manual de misiones – la iglesia local* produced by Ministerios de Misiones Mundiales (International Pentecostal Holiness Church). This was found on the Internet and also dovetails nicely with the information for the local church missions committee.

Many of the people involved in cross-cultural missions have stressed the importance of adequate training for missionaries leaving their culture to work in another. There is a tremendous focus in the literature on how to train Latin

Americans in cross-cultural missions. Fortunately, much of this is available in Spanish and can be accessed on the Internet.¹⁵⁰

Pastoral care is another area that is dealt with extensively by numerous writers. Perhaps the most helpful pastoral care resource will be *Demasiado valioso para que se pierda* (Too Valuable to Lose), edited by William D. Taylor. This book, which is available on an Internet web site in Spanish, is a tremendous help in thinking about the issues related to the attrition of missionaries.¹⁵¹ Attrition is a great problem in any missionary endeavor, but will probably be even greater for many of the pioneer missionaries leaving from Latin American countries, especially those from newly created sending agencies.

The Honduran Baptists will do well to familiarize themselves with the pastoral care issues that must be faced by sending agencies. If they are to be at all successful in sending and maintaining cross-cultural missionaries for an extended period of time, they must wrestle with the issues related to the pastoral care of missionaries. Unfortunately, this is one area that is most likely to be ignored, especially by those who are as unfamiliar with cross-cultural mission trends as the Honduran Baptists are. There is more interest in getting the missionary to the mission field than there is in keeping him there.

The Role of the Local Church

An area of resources that deserves much emphasis is that of the role of the local church in cross-cultural missions. These resources are of vital interest to

¹⁵⁰ See the articles posted on www.missionarytraining.org and www.wearesources.org.

¹⁵¹ Available at www.missionarytraining.org.

pastors and laity alike as they begin to imagine what God can do through their efforts. They are also helpful tools for church leaders to utilize in introducing the local church to the role it can play in sending missionaries.

One Latin American pastor who has written on this subject is Samuel Cueva, a Chilean who presently pastors in England. He was invited by International Mission Board regional leaders to speak at a Latin American mobilization conference in London in 2002. It was at that conference that the seed for this thesis was planted. Samuel Cueva autographed a copy of his book on the local church's role in cross-cultural missions. That was the beginning of bibliographical investigation for this thesis.

Other Latin American pastors who have written on this area include Edison Queiroz, Federico Bertuzzi, and Eugenia Campos. Queiroz and Bertuzzi are often quoted by other Latin American pastors when speaking or writing about the local church's role in cross-cultural missions.

In addition to these Latin American pastors, there are several North Americans whose writings are available in Spanish. Norman Lewis' book on financing missions is helpful to get a full treatment of this vital issue since it deals mostly from a local church perspective. Neal Pirolo's book is an outstanding resource for the local church that is desirous of sending cross-cultural missionaries since it focuses on the role of the local church in sending missionaries. Pirolo also makes the point that one can serve God by enabling others to serve in cross-cultural situations (what has sometimes been called "holding the rope"). In fact, the title of the book in Spanish makes that point clear (Serving to send workers). Jack Chapin's

article on the relationship between the local church and the mission agency was found only in English, but is still of value to Latin Americans.

In spite of the fact that there are a few books relevant to the local church's role in sending cross-cultural missionaries, there are not nearly enough of them. There needs to be much more available to Latin American Christians on how their local church can participate in global missions. The inclusion of testimonies by both the senders and the sent and the histories of churches that have discovered the joys of sending missionaries will greatly benefit the local church as it discovers its potential for impacting the world for Christ.

Organizational Documents

Another group of resources is comprised of those documents that offer assistance in understanding the organizational structure of a sending agency. While relatively few of these resources were acquired and passed on to the Hondurans, they are a great tool for them to utilize in deciding the structure of their own organization. These documents provide a great opportunity for the creators of a Honduran Baptist sending agency to see how others have handled the same issues that they will eventually have to face.

These documents cover a wide range of sending agencies. There are four Latin American sending agencies represented, including the Brazilian Baptist Convention, which has approximately 300 cross-cultural missionaries serving in dozens of countries. Two of the Latin American agencies are small and relatively new. One other agency, the Argentine Baptist sending agency (AMI), has a healthy

record of sending missionaries even during the time when their currency was devalued and the cost of supporting cross-cultural missionaries was a tremendous financial burden. This latter organization actually served in 2003 to send a Honduran woman on a six-month mission experience to India.

One other document is an operations manual from an international sending agency that specializes in sending Latin Americans to Muslim countries. The remaining document is from the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. This document shows the complexity of a very large sending agency, but also is useful for those creating a new agency to see the kinds of issues that an older, large agency encounters.

This is another area that greatly needs to have more resources made available. Much can be learned by observing how others are dealing with the relevant issues of sending and maintaining cross-cultural missionaries. During the research for this thesis I spoke on several occasions with a colleague in Guatemala who had participated in the creation of the sending agency for Guatemalan Baptists. They had taken a much different approach than I have with the Hondurans, but I was curious to see their documents and policies. Interestingly, they did not have much in written form in spite of having been in existence for several years and in spite of having sent out several missionaries. This seems to be somewhat typical of the lack of documentation related to the creation process of sending agencies.

One caveat for the Honduran Baptists to consider is the amount of influence that non-Latin Americans may have had in the creation of other Latin American sending agencies. Just because a sister-church or convention in a neighboring

country has created a sending agency does not mean that it is an indigenous agency. Again, the goal in this Doctor of Ministry thesis is for the Hondurans to arrive at their own conclusions about what kind of agency they need and to create an agency that fulfills their distinctive needs.

Tentmaking Issues

Perhaps the most exciting area in mobilization is that of tentmaking. Because it has the potential to minimize some of the logistical difficulties inherent in cross-cultural missions (e.g. funding, visas, etc.), tentmaking offers Latin Americans a way to send missionaries without having to have a fully developed and functioning Western-style sending agency.

A seminal work on this issue was written by J. Christy Wilson Jr. It is slightly dated, but still valuable for an introduction to tentmaking as a missionary strategy. The Heinz Suter book (*Poder empresarial en misión integral*) is also a good starter tool in the hands of a person interested in being a tentmaker. By far the most practical tool is the workbook by Jonathan Lewis (*Trabajando tu llamado a las naciones*), which allows the prospective tentmaker to work his/her way through the text by answering relevant questions about God's call and the person's willingness to serve as a tentmaker.

Ruth E. Siemens worked as a tentmaker in various parts of the world for many years and was an outstanding spokesperson for tentmaking. She founded the tentmaking organization "Global Opportunities" and published numerous articles on an evangelism method she called "fishing." She also wrote several apologetics for

tentmaking, one of which I have quoted on several occasions in this thesis. So far I have not found any of her writings translated into Spanish, which is surprising since she spent so much time in South America. Perhaps someday her writings will be made available to the Spanish-speaking world.

An interesting read is the book by Don Hamilton (*Tentmakers Speak: Practical Advice from over 400 Missionary Tentmakers*) that offered tentmakers the opportunity to evaluate their experiences and offer suggestions as to how other tentmakers could avoid some of the negative experiences. This resource is probably a very practical tool for the prospective tentmaker because of the value of seeing what mistakes others have committed and how those mistakes can be avoided. More of these kinds of books are needed, especially in Spanish.

The Role of the Internet

The Internet is playing an important role in the mobilization of Latin Americans to cross-cultural missions. Since many of the books and articles that are most pertinent to the issues involved are written in English and take a considerable amount of time to be published, then translated, then republished in Spanish, there is a tremendous lag in the time until Latin American church members are able to utilize these resources.

With the availability of materials on the Internet, a church member or potential missionary can access many of the same articles and books that the leading Latin American missiologists are using as resources.

The Internet provides numerous resources in Spanish for the Honduran Baptists to use. There is even a course for completing the workbook for tentmakers that can be done entirely online.¹⁵² Some web sites provide PowerPoint® presentations that can be downloaded and used in local churches to promote missions education and to motivate individuals and churches to become more involved in cross-cultural missions.¹⁵³

It is quite likely that the Internet will continue to play a vital role in the development of cross-cultural missions agencies in the future as more materials are compiled and added to existing and new missions web sites. In fact, as I have worked on this thesis I have noticed a dramatic increase in web sites devoted to one aspect or another of missions from the Two-Thirds World.

Other Resources

For the purposes of this thesis there are other resources that should be mentioned. In 1980, Lawrence Keyes undertook a study to identify all missionary organizations around the world. He published that study in 1983. Then, in 1988, Larry Pate decided to update that study. He first endeavored to eliminate any organizations that did not actually send missionaries, and then to eliminate any that were not at that time sending missionaries. He published his book in 1989 and it included a list of the agencies from around the world.

One of the interesting themes here is that there are many organizations involved in missions in one way or another, but they are not missionary sending

¹⁵² This can be found on the www.missionarytraining.com web site.

¹⁵³ These can be found on the www.comibam.org web site.

organizations or agencies. On a practical note, I discovered a similar reality when investigating those agencies that are listed by COMIBAM for Honduras: most of them simply advocate missions involvement, they do not send missionaries. Even their advocacy is of a limited nature.

Another area of interest is the theses and dissertations that have been published that are related to the theme of this thesis. A Doctor of Ministry student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School published one such thesis in 1994. According to the abstract listed on the ATLA catalog web page, he “designed a mission-sending agency for the Chinese Evangelical Alliance Church (TEAM) in Taiwan, Republic of China, and which was completed in partnership with national church leaders and missionaries.” The author, Philip A. Schwab, would not appear to be an ethnic Chinese. He did, however, compare the constitution and bylaws that he wrote for the Taiwanese sending agency “with other Taiwanese agencies' organizational policies to ensure compatibility with Chinese thinking, methodology and culture.” This is quite different from the approach taken for this thesis.

The Most Useful Resources for This Thesis Project

Certain resources are indispensable for the task of creating a sending agency. For the Honduran Baptists, the first of these would be *La administración eficaz de una agencia de envío* by Denis Lane. This book would serve as a skeleton that would allow them to begin to build upon as they continued to read and access other resources. It is general in scope and lacks in-depth details of how to go about

making some of the decisions it mentions. In spite of its occasional superficiality, it is an outstanding first source in preparation for creating a sending agency.

The next indispensable tool for the Hondurans is *Misionología: Nuestro cometido transcultural* by Larry D. Pate. This book will not only broaden their understanding of some of the missiological issues raised in the Denis Lane book, it will also enable them to look at the creation of strategy in an understandable way. While the three chapters dealing with strategy may be the weakest parts of this book, they are written in a culturally appropriate manner for the Hondurans, whose strength is not planning.

The third tool that the Hondurans must utilize is the Neal Pirolo book *Sirviendo al enviar obreros*. Because of this book's emphasis on the role of the local church and the various important roles the local church has in the support of the missionary, it will be indispensable to their creative efforts.

The last of the indispensable resources is the pastoral care book *Demasiado valioso para que se pierda* edited by Guillermo Taylor. This will be the book most easily overlooked by the Hondurans because it will appear to them to be dealing with issues way out into the future. However, by reading this book they will equip themselves better for the tasks of recruitment of potential missionaries, the creation of personnel policies, and creating and maintaining relationships between the sending agency and the local church as well as other mission agencies.

These four works are in Spanish and are the most useful of all the resources located. They will greatly facilitate the creation of the sending agency by Honduran Baptists.

Conclusion

There are sufficient resources available to Honduran Baptists and others who are interested in creating their own missionary sending agency to begin that creation process. Many of these resources are available in both Spanish and English on the Internet and are often more recent than printed materials. However, printed materials also abound that can be utilized by those creating a sending agency.

Many more resources are needed to bolster the attempts of Honduran Baptists and other groups as they initiate the process of creating indigenous sending agencies. As more agencies are created and more Latin Americans recognize their role in sending cross-cultural missionaries in fulfillment of the Great Commission, there will be more materials made available for future generations.

Resources are multiplying rapidly on the Internet. There has been a discernable increase in both web sites and literature resources committed to missions mobilization and this fact bodes well for those Latin Americans who are intent on creating indigenous sending agencies.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

In January 2002 my wife and I were contacted by a missionary leader in our organization about the possibility of moving to the Middle East to work with Latin American missionaries. The mobilization of Latin Americans to Muslim countries had been underway for some time and had caught the attention of this regional leader and several of his associates. It was thought that a Spanish-speaking couple could facilitate the arrival, the adaptation, and the eventual launching of these Latin Americans into neighboring countries.

We attended a missions mobilization conference in November 2002 in London where we met several Latin American missionaries who live and work in North Africa. We began to catch a vision for helping mobilize Latin Americans to work in Muslim countries. From London we traveled to Cairo, then to Amman to meet with the regional leader. We met more than a dozen more Latin American missionaries in Cairo and were able to discuss with them the advantages and disadvantages of having Latin Americans serving as missionaries in Muslim countries.

We were given one month to decide whether or not we would make the move to North Africa. We prayed earnestly for God's will to be revealed to us regarding this decision. At the end of the month we had not heard anything from God. We put

off making the final decision for several more weeks until we felt like we could not put it off any longer. We informed the regional leader that we had not heard anything from God about whether or not to proceed. We had, however, become convinced that we were to have something to do with the mobilization of Latin Americans to cross-cultural missions.

Upon our return to Honduras from the Middle East, we began to share our experiences with friends, both Hondurans and North Americans. As we shared we began to perceive a wave of interest building, especially among the Hondurans. There were a handful who were convinced that the time had arrived for Honduran Baptists to begin to have an Acts 1:8 view of missions instead of simply seeing themselves as the mission field. Continued conversations with these individuals lead me to begin asking myself what it would take for Honduran Baptists to create a mission sending organization of their own.

I am committed to indigeneity in national mission organizations. This meant that I could not interfere in the creation of the agency to the point where it would reflect either my influence or that of my sending agency. I wanted to help the Honduran Baptists create a sending agency, but without leaving my “fingerprints” all over the agency. I knew that if they made decisions based on trying to please me or other mission agencies, that eventually those decisions would come back to cause them many problems in the future. The mission sending organization needed to be completely Honduran.

While Hondurans have many great abilities and qualities, organization and long-term planning are not generally strong areas for them. The same spontaneity

that makes living in Latin America so much fun also mitigates against a well thought-out organization. How then to help them prepare themselves for the creation of the sending agency?

I decided to make a list of the questions that I thought they would need to answer for themselves (and for others) in the time leading up to the creation of the agency as well as for the first two to three years of its existence. Since Baptists are congregational as well as democratic, they would need to be able to explain in detail to the individual Baptist churches that make up the Honduras Baptist Convention what the sending agency would be and how it would operate. By answering these questions, they should be able to explain it all to themselves and to others.

The Working Group

I decided that the best approach was to find a group of qualified and respected pastors and/or leaders who could work their way through the questions and deal with the difficult decisions before taking a proposal to the Honduras Baptist Convention. It seemed to me that it would be far easier to present and defend a proposal that had been thought through in detail than to present a number of options that would likely bring about extended debate and disagreement.

There were two pastors who were obvious choices for me. One was well thought of throughout the convention and had extensive home and foreign missions knowledge and experience. The other, while much younger, had immersed himself in cross-cultural missions books and conferences and had actually sent someone from his church to India for six months. It was clear that these two men had a

burning desire for cross-cultural missions. So, I began by asking them if they were interested in joining a working group to consider the issues related to the formation of a mission sending organization. They both agreed and began to recommend others that they knew would be good candidates also.

The working group was composed of six men from different parts of the country who had cross-cultural missions experience of some kind, but who also had a strong desire to see Honduran Baptists send cross-cultural missionaries.

César Peña is one of the longest-serving Baptist pastors in Honduras. It was he who first agreed to form part of the working group. In addition to having led his church to plant numerous churches in various parts of Honduras, he has also been involved in missions activities outside of Honduras. Because he is generally liked and respected throughout the convention, he brought legitimacy to the working group that was indispensable for the working group's proposal to be taken seriously by the Honduras Baptist Convention.

Bayron García is a young pastor with a heart for cross-cultural missions. His knowledge of Latin American involvement in cross-cultural missions made him a natural choice for inclusion in the working group. Shortly after beginning to work on the manual questions, he led his church to begin a training center for cross-cultural missionaries. They began their School of Missions in 2004 and plan to send their first graduates to India in 2005.

Misael Marriaga is a former president of the Honduras Baptist Convention and the pastor of a missions-oriented church. He has also made numerous mission

trips outside of Honduras. His church also recently sent a medical doctor to live and work in West Africa.

Tomás Montoya is the current president of the Honduras Baptist Convention and has served several times in that capacity. He, too, has cross-cultural missions experience outside of Honduras. He will also lend credibility to the final proposal by the working group.

Manuel Pon was until recently the missions pastor of a large Baptist church in San Pedro Sula. He continued in the working group for the first few meetings, but then withdrew due to a crisis in his church.

Carlos Mendoza is a bi-vocational Baptist pastor who works for the Luke Society in western Honduras. His administrative skills as well as his fluency in English made him an attractive member of the working group. Those English skills will enable him to access written materials that are only available in English. Carlos has worked for many years with teams of medical volunteers from the United States. He is also recognized as someone with a strong desire to see Honduran Baptists have a sending agency.

Each man agreed to read through the questions and make comments in the margins in preparation for a meeting in which they would begin to discuss the issues related to a mission sending agency and try to work out what would be the best approach for Honduran Baptists to take in creating such an agency. At this point I discussed with them my interest in not influencing them in one way or another and asked them how I could best serve them. Their response was that I should remain

outside the group and yet be available for the clarification of issues related to the questions themselves.

I was told a few weeks later by several of the group members that they were very pleased with the manual of questions that I had presented to each of them. They felt that I had covered the major areas of concern without overwhelming them with issues and questions. I was told that the next time they convened most of them brought their manuals with the comments in the margins and were ready to begin discussing the issues.

If I had been allowed to continue having input into the process, I would have set periodic meeting dates and deadlines for decisions to be made. However, because this agency was to be “birthed” in an indigenous manner, the Hondurans proceeded at their own pace. Especially because I was concerned about writing the thesis, I wanted everything to be done on a North American timetable. Fortunately for them, I was able to resist the urge to meddle. They have been able to work as a group without any apparent influence from non-Honduran sources.

It appears that these six men were the ones most likely to follow through on this project, and also had enough credibility for the other Baptist leaders to consider their work worthy of approval. From the reports I have received, it appears that through this process they have enlarged their collective vision for Honduran Baptists as global missions participants.

The Structure of the Agency

The premise of this thesis was that the sending agency should be autochthonous to the culture. “The *ideal* organizational structure would be one that is similar to structures already present in the culture. Or alternatively it may be a structure that members of the culture are already adopting because they see it as workable and effective. The principles of such an organizational structure may be very different from those the missionary understands.”¹⁵⁴

The rest of this chapter follows the outline of the manual (Appendix A) that the Hondurans used to begin asking themselves important questions about what the agency would look like and how it would function. Policy issues are also included since many of these have to do with the nature of the agency and would need to be explained to the Honduran Baptist Convention as well as to individual churches.

In Latin America there is a much greater emphasis on the legal organization of non-profit bodies than there is the United States. This impacts churches on a regular basis because they often do not have the resources needed to become a recognized organization according to the government. Without such recognition the opening of bank accounts, the ownership of property, and tax exemption are impossible. For a church wanting to send missionaries, these obstacles can be overwhelming. For a missionary sending agency it is essential to have government recognition. In order to achieve that, there have to be a constitution, bylaws, and legal filings.

¹⁵⁴ Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 163 (Italics theirs).

The decisions that have to be made in order to arrive at such an organization can be extremely tedious. For anyone without experience in this area, the seemingly minor and unimportant details that must be explained in detail would appear to be a waste of time. In the long run, however, these details will prove to be of great assistance to the Hondurans as they attempt to send missionaries without undue conflict within the organization. The success of the endeavor could easily rest on how efficiently the organization operates.

Latin Americans love pomp and circumstance. They love the formalism of hierarchies and assemblies. They especially love titles and positions of authority. All of these tendencies work against the creation of a sending agency that has limited bureaucracy.

One problem with this tendency is the financial aspect of it. If the Honduran Baptists enjoyed an affluent lifestyle that allowed for such luxuries, elaborate assemblies and lofty titles would be more appropriate as a cultural expression of organizational life. The present day financial reality, however, is that Honduran Baptists cannot afford to have an expensive bureaucracy as part of their sending agency. They must find ways to operate the agency very inexpensively.

In fact, a major obstacle to the creation of this sending agency will be the source of the funds needed to create a legal organization. It was probably hoped by some that the Baptist Mission would make a financial contribution to such an undertaking, but no such contributions were made to the national conventions in other countries. A start was made recently toward gathering enough funds by the Honduras Baptist Convention at its 2005 annual meeting with the creation of a

missions fund in memory of Larry and Jean Elliott who were killed in Iraq after having had served for 24 years in Honduras.

Besides the importance of keeping the costs at a minimum for financial reasons, there is also the need to keep the bureaucracy “thin” so that the agency does not become so big that it begins to take the place of the local church as the principal force behind the sending of missionaries. With the emphasis on the local church as the initiator in the sending process, there is less need for a huge bureaucracy. With the appointment of additional missionaries, there will need to be more support staff within the agency, but at no point should those individuals take the place of those in the local church who need to be involved in the sending process as much as possible.

Another problem with those tendencies is that people desire the glory of positions and titles who may have no interest whatsoever in missions. In fact, because of the fairly significant amounts of money involved, the desire to control how those funds are utilized may motivate individuals and cliques to attempt to gain control of the organization.¹⁵⁵ Even with good legal bases these problems will not be completely avoided. They can be minimized, however, with a careful crafting of the organization’s constitution, bylaws, mission and vision statements.

It is absolutely vital that there be confidence in the financial accountability of this organization. To that end there are issues related to oversight that the creators of the organization must decide. The role of an independent person who can act as a sort of auditor of meetings and decision-making is one possibility for such an organization. This person is sometimes referred to as a “fiscal” and is often a part of

¹⁵⁵ Pate, 379.

non-profit organizations. The selection of such a person and that person's role within the organization should be decided at an early stage in the development of the agency.

For a culture that works on patronage (who you know), the processes of application, investigation, interview, and appointment can be fraught with many shortcuts or short circuits. These processes need to be well defined and the opportunities for short circuits eliminated or minimized so that the important selection processes not fall into disrepute. The long-term success of the sending agency depends upon the integrity of the sending process and that the most qualified candidates be sent.

The same patronage system that could negatively impact the selection process of candidates can also affect the personnel of the sending agency. This was evidenced when in 2002 the national convention appointed a committee to investigate the possibility of creating a sending agency. The members of that committee were appointed for political (patronage) reasons, and not for any knowledge or love of missions. The formation of the board of directors of the agency will to a great extent determine how well it develops into a successful sending agency.

Agency Relationships

The area of relationships is one that is fraught with diverse kinds of dangers. The Honduran Baptists themselves were well aware of many of these dangers as we began to meet and talk about the creation of a sending agency. Because they know

of their own history in relations to both missions and their cultural tendencies in administering organizations, they are aware that they must make good decisions concerning the various relationships they will form with other organizations.

The first relationship they must deal with is that of the agency to the Honduras Baptist Convention. If the agency is created as a part of the convention, it will be much more inclined to fall victim to the dangers enumerated earlier in regards to control issues, political appointments, and patronage issues. However, if the agency is created to be independent of the convention, there will be skepticism as to its legitimacy. Its acceptance by the Baptist churches could be compromised by such independence, and some Baptist pastors may reject it as an option because of this independence.

This same issue has been faced by other national Baptist conventions in neighboring countries. In Mexico a new, independent sending agency was created when the national convention exercised inappropriate influence over the funds that had been given to individual missionaries. In Guatemala the sending agency was created to be semi-independent in order to avoid some of the recognized pitfalls, but the effectiveness of the organization has yet to be proved.

Once the Honduran Baptists decide what the relationship will be between the agency and the national convention, they will be able to think about how the agency will relate to individual churches. The relationship of the agency to the local churches is actually separate from that of its relationship to the convention because in Baptist polity, any church decides whether or not it wants to relate to any or all of the other Baptist entities. It is possible for a Honduras Baptist Convention church to

give nothing to the convention and not to participate in any national Baptist events, and still be considered a convention church. There may also be Honduran Baptist churches that temporarily withdraw from the convention, but that will continue to participate in numerous convention activities, including the sending of missionaries.

So, those who create the sending agency will need to keep in mind that they will be relating to churches both within and outside the national convention. While some Honduran Baptists will think of the agency as being the Honduran Baptist Convention's agency, others will see it as an entity that they may want to relate to at some point in the future, but one that does not intersect with their present ministry.

The need for special attention to be paid to the relationship between the agency and local churches is especially critical since the trend in Latin America is for the local church to be the focus of the sending process. The agency in many cases is more of a facilitator of the sending process. If there is a strong emphasis placed by the agency on being the facilitator for the local church's missionary sending efforts, then local churches will be much more inclined to consider it as an option. This is especially true of those stronger churches that might be inclined to think that they have the ability and expertise to send missionaries without any outside assistance. Those churches that do recognize their own limitations are less likely to heed the implications of the agency's focus on the local church's participation in the sending process.

The first aspect of this relationship to the local church is in the area of recruitment. That word in itself carries a negative connotation of an agency seeking out a church's members to send them overseas, which is a fear that pastors may

harbor. In this case, the term recruitment refers to the activities related to the presentation of the sending agency as an option for someone interested in serving as a cross-cultural missionary. The investigation process goes both ways: the candidate investigates the options available to him in the area of sending agencies, and the agency invests the candidate to see if his calling to missions is genuine and if that candidate might actually be qualified to be considered for service.

Because of financial restrictions, the agency will not be able to have a group of individuals available to travel around the country making presentations to individual churches or even associations on a regular basis. To a great extent publicity will occur at the annual convention of churches. As the agency develops and begins to experience notable successes in the placement of qualified missionaries, word will spread that the agency is an option that can be well considered by individuals and the churches that plan to send them.

The second aspect of the relationship between the local church and the sending agency is that of serving as a conduit for contributions from churches to missionaries who are sent from other churches. It is highly unlikely at this point in Honduran Baptist life that one church will be capable of financially supporting a missionary or missionary couple indefinitely. The candidates will most likely visit numerous churches in search of additional financial support. Since the Cooperative Program approach used by Southern Baptists in the United States has never worked well in Latin America, the approach most favored by Latin American churches is for an account to exist in the name of the missionary, and for those funds to be used only for that missionary.

These churches that contribute toward a missionary's support will certainly expect financial reports from the agency as well as ministry reports from either the agency or the sending church. It behooves the agency to publicize to some extent the work of missionaries, but that may entail more personnel and effort than is available and affordable. The sending church may see such reporting as its responsibility and the two entities, sending church and sending agency, will need to define beforehand how such reporting is to be accomplished.

Another aspect of the relationship between sending church and sending agency is the continual interaction between the two organizations. On one hand, there will be frequent strategy and ministry-related issues that must be addressed by the missionary, the sending church, and the sending agency. Eventually, all three will have enough experience to use in decision-making that these questions will more easily dealt with, but in the initial stages there will be tremendous opportunities for crisis and conflict. On the other hand there will be practical issues that need to be addressed on an ongoing basis. A strong, healthy relationship between the sending church and the agency can facilitate the implementation of commonly reached decisions. A poor relationship, however, can make even simple decisions appear to be major crises.

A fourth aspect of this relationship between the local church and the sending agency is which churches the agency will work with. This may be determined in part by the final decision related to the relationship of the agency to the national convention. If, however, the agency is independent of the national convention, the possibility exists to work with either non-Baptist churches that want to send

missionaries through the sending agency, or Baptist churches that might not be participating for one reason or another with the Honduras Baptist Convention. These latter can be problematic for the agency if convention politics are allowed to enter into the agency's relationships with either the national convention or other churches.

There are some inherent pitfalls in working with non-Baptist churches that the agency creators would do well to analyze before deciding whether or not to work together.¹⁵⁶ These pitfalls include doctrinal issues as well as strategy issues (which will be discussed in another section). By having discussed the kinds of difficulties that can arise through these relationships, the Honduran Baptists will be better prepared for facing those difficulties should they ever arise.

A separate issue is that the sending agency creators will need to decide how to relate to other Baptist and non-Baptist sending and receiving agencies.¹⁵⁷ Such relationships will enhance the overall ministry of the agency if these relationships are carefully chosen and nurtured. To some extent the outlines of relationships with these entities can be sketched out beforehand, but some details will have to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

There is also the extremely important issue of how the agency will relate to national conventions and individual churches in places to which they send missionaries. It is most desirable not to enter into fields that have existing Evangelical works with an attitude that the area is completely unevangelized. The

¹⁵⁶ Honduran Baptist leaders are always sensitive to the dangers of working with non-Baptist groups. They have had bad experiences in the past and tend to recall those as normative for all interaction with non-Baptist groups.

¹⁵⁷ Pate, 400.

sending agency will want to establish and maintain good relationships with existing national churches and conventions. They will also want to decide how to relate to new churches they begin. There should be a well thought out strategy for the creation of associations of churches that are started by the missionaries, or the process by which these churches could join existing associations that have similar doctrines and practices.

Funding Issues

Even if the agency makes a tremendous effort to avoid spending large amounts of money on administrative functions, there are still going to be basic expenses that are a part of doing business. The agency creators will need to decide where the funds will come for administration. One potential source would be the national Baptist convention. Another source could be that a certain percentage of what is sent to the missionary is kept for administrative purposes. It is possible for the agency to cover its administrative expenses through donations made directly to the agency by individuals, churches, or other sodalities. Each of these options carries with it advantages and disadvantages that the creators will want to analyze before making the decision. The creators will also need to ask themselves what the potential risks and unintended consequences might be for each of these methods of administrative financing.

The kinds of administrative costs can be much greater than what one would normally think who is not accustomed to running such a non-profit organization. The renewal fees for government-recognized status or for tax exemption are a

hidden cost that may often be overlooked. Banking fees are another area that can be easily overlooked. The costs associated with personal interviews and meetings to decide personnel and strategy decisions must be considered, too.

If there is a recruitment process there will be administrative costs associated with that process. The agency may want to make presentations to individual churches, associations of churches, and to the annual convention of Baptist churches. Both the travel expenses and the cost of materials for such presentations will fall under the administrative heading.

Besides the general cost of doing business, there will be costs associated with the sending and maintaining of missionaries abroad. Financial reports for individual missionaries will need to be filed with the sending church and possibly receipts sent to each individual donor who gives for a specific missionary directly to the sending agency.

Specific issues must be dealt with in regards to any financial responsibility on the part of the agency for supervisory visits. However, if the agency declines to take any part in the supervision of missionaries, that, too will need to be articulated clearly in any agreement with the missionary and the sending church.

The agency's role in pastoral care visits will need to be specified as well. These visits are highly recommended so that the missionary receive at least some degree of pastoral care and attention from his home congregation. If the missionary is working in a closed country and the sending agency's name and legal status are being used as a platform for the missionary, then there may be a need for the agency to facilitate such pastoral care visits.

Another financial issue is how emergencies will be dealt with. Unless the agency decides that it has absolutely no role to play in such a case, emergency funds will need to be set aside in case of evacuation or the death of a missionary or family member. How much is to be set aside and when it is to be fully vested need to be decided. There may be the need to have these funds on hand even before the missionary is allowed to leave his home country.

Likewise, there may need to be a percentage of the missionary's annual support received before the missionary can leave for the field. Since financial support tends to go down while the missionary is away from home, it is best not to be naïve about expecting the support level to increase while the missionary is on the field. He will be anxious to leave for the field, even though perhaps only a fraction of the funds he will need have been received by the sending agency.

Some missionaries who do deputation to raise their support need to draw on that support even before they leave for the field. The decision of when a missionary can begin receiving his support must be made. Does support begin during training, language school and/or orientation? Does support begin only when the missionary is physically in the country to which he has been sent?

In the case of tentmakers, how will financial decisions be made? An unprofitable business is a bad testimony, but some tentmakers have an aversion to profit.¹⁵⁸ If the tentmaker goes to the mission field on a business platform, how does any profit realized from that business get treated? Can it be used to support him (in

¹⁵⁸ Steven Rundle, *Ministry, profits, and the schizophrenic tentmaker*. Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2000. <http://www.globalopps.org/articles/rundles.htm>.

which case there might be a temptation on the missionary's part to spend too much time in the secular realm trying to increase his financial base)?

A particularly delicate issue is whether or not funding from sources outside of Honduras will be either accepted or solicited. Because of an underlying tendency on the part of Hondurans to seek assistance from outside first, the creators of the agency should be very careful to avoid making that option too attractive for the prospective missionary (and sending church). At the inception of the agency, there will doubtless be a desire to seek benefactors who can bankroll the startup. In fact, at one time I seriously considered making a substantial contribution toward this very thing, but was then reminded of my thesis that this should be an indigenous sending agency with as few evidences of outside influence as possible. The best policy may be not to accept contributions until after the agency has shown Hondurans that they can, in fact, financially support missionaries through their own resources.

These are the kinds of questions that need to be addressed by the creators of the Honduran Baptist sending agency, which were presented to them in the manual. They are the kinds of issues that most of those creating the agency would not have had enough experience to raise themselves.

Personnel Issues

The manual has quite a few questions related to personnel issues since this is one of the most difficult areas in the entire endeavor. Knowing who to send and how to relate to them presents all sorts of dilemmas. This section will deal with some of those difficult areas.

The first area is the recruitment of candidates. A decision needs to be made as to whether or not the agency will actively seek out missionary candidates or if they will only respond when a Baptist church presents a potential candidate to them. Decisions also need to be made, if recruitment is to be done, how to avoid causing conflict between a candidate and his family and/or his church. If candidates are actively recruited, there may be times when a person whose call has not been confirmed by the church will respond to a recruitment pitch. Some voices have been raised in missiological circles about the potential for “emotionally based appeals” to be abused in the search for missionary candidates.¹⁵⁹

Once the agency has a candidate, it must begin a process whereby it examines the candidate in order to determine whether or not to send that person as a missionary. This process will need to be culturally appropriate, but it will also need to satisfy certain criteria that the agency will want to determine beforehand, such as the use of references, how much ministerial and/or missions experience as well as any cross-cultural experience the candidate might have. The person’s maturity and level of adaptability will need to be determined in some culturally appropriate manner.

Once it is determined the candidate is viable, the level of training needed must be determined. This issue of training will need to be dealt with by both the agency and the sending church. Within Latin America there are training centers that have a long history of preparing cross-cultural missionaries. Some newer centers are also being formed and may provide the kind of training the Honduran Baptist missionaries would require. Both general training as well as specific training for a

¹⁵⁹ Lane, 27 (My translation).

specific task on the field must be considered.¹⁶⁰ In addition to the “ministry” training, there should be training in areas such as interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and healthy spiritual life disciplines.

The basic education level of the candidate must be considered when determining his feasibility for a particular place and type of ministry. With the economic and technological situation of the world today, there is little demand in most countries for undereducated individuals in fields other than menial labor.¹⁶¹ The attempt to acquire a resident visa may be thwarted by a lack of marketability of the candidate. Often because the undereducated of the country in question suffer high unemployment rates, the government is loath to hire foreigners to do work that nationals can do. This creates a problem for the sending church if the candidate has limited marketable skills. The candidate may need to enhance his basic education before continuing through the process of selection by the sending agency.

A great deal of discussion has occurred in missiological circles related to the level of preparation needed for service in cross-cultural missions. Some see that “the lack of missionary training continues to be one of the causes of premature abandonment of the field.”¹⁶² Whatever criteria the sending church and agency choose for determining the level of the training of candidates, they must be consistent with the needs of those on the field as well as consistent with what is appropriate for the candidate. Otherwise, the level of frustration will compound

¹⁶⁰ A Honduran Baptist church that was involved from the beginning in this process of creating a sending agency instituted a training program for cross-cultural missionaries in early 2004. More will be said about this later in this thesis.

¹⁶¹ Siemens, 121.

¹⁶² Lane, 11 (My translation).

other frustrations that are commonly encountered in cross-cultural missions.

Likewise, the amount of experience of a potential tentmaker needs to be determined. Since most mission agencies take tentmaking seriously and do not see it as a façade for missionary activity, there needs to be a certain level of competency on the part of the tentmaker. The agency will want to be sure that a person is just as qualified for the tentmaking position as for any other kind of position for which the candidate might apply.

Many of these decisions are based on issues related to a particular field of service. The selection of that field of service may play a role in the sending process of the missionary. Dayton and Fraser have discovered five “Field Selection Practices” that can be used in determining where a particular missionary will serve.¹⁶³ In some cases the missionary will already have made this field selection even before he initiates the application process. In other cases the sending church and/or the sending agency will have input into this decision. Of the five selection practices, two (“Charismatic field selection” and “Rational field selection”) lend themselves more to the candidate’s preference, and the other three (“Traditional, Ecclesio-political, and Situational Field Selection”) lend themselves more to the sending church’s and/or sending agency’s participation.

The issue of the supervision of the missionary on the field will need to be addressed. In Latin America, there is not a strong sense of accountability. In fact, there is not a good word in Spanish for the concept as it has evolved in English over

¹⁶³ Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser, 62-63.

the last few years in the sense of personal accountability to others. The word most commonly used to translate accountability into Spanish actually means “transparency” in the sense that one is allowing others to see all that is occurring in a particular situation. A Spanish phrase “*rendir cuentas*” can be understood to mean “to give an accounting for” something. The English sense of “owing” others an accounting of our actions is absent from the Spanish word and phrase.

The missionary may, or may not, have a supervisor on the field who is able to report back to the sending church how well the missionary is doing in both personal adaptation and in ministry. If there is not an on-field supervisor, the agency needs to find some way of evaluating the missionary’s work in a manner that will satisfy the sending church. Even if a sending church indicates that it does not need to receive reports from a missionary, the agency will want to receive feedback from the missionary and others who work with him in order to be able to maintain the agency’s credibility with other sending or receiving agencies. The frequency and kind of evaluations must be determined and communicated to the missionary before he leaves for the field.¹⁶⁴

In some cases, the sending church may want the pastor to act as the missionary’s supervisor. In that case the agency will want to facilitate the education of both the sending church and the supervising pastor in Missiology. The agency might want to offer suggested guidelines for a pastor with no cross-cultural experience to use in supervising a missionary who may be thousands of miles distant from the sending church. It would also be wise for the agency to encourage the local

¹⁶⁴ Lane, 45 (My translation).

church to think through the issues such as what to do if the pastor leaves the sending church.

In the case of a termination, either by the missionary, by the sending church, or the agency, there will need to be policies in place that facilitate the process in an ethical, legal, and spiritual manner. When there is no group responsible for having such policies, they usually do not get made. In the case of a termination, it is far better to know what the parameters are for the different people and organizations involved.

I was recently involved in a situation where a Latin American missionary to Panama resigned his assignment, but wanted to continue to receive financial support from the sending church. The end result was that no one was satisfied, not the missionary, not the sending church, not the sending agency, and certainly not the receiving church. The missionary remained in the same area and (perhaps inadvertently) pulled leadership away from the receiving church to work in a new ministry. The sending agency had no policy in place to deal with such a situation. It now recognizes that this may happen again in another field, so the leadership is discussing ways to handle such a situation in the future.

Member care is an area that is easily overlooked by both the sending church and the sending agency. A tendency for Latin Americans to spiritualize all things (“God will provide”) may preclude them from entertaining the notion that a missionary will need spiritual guidance and refreshment while on the field. The concept that the missionary is a more spiritual person than the “regular” church

members back home who did not get a call from God may also work against having policies in place that relate to member care.

Not all are oblivious to the importance of pastoral care. Christopher Shaw says, “This growing concern for those who have fallen by the wayside has had a sobering effect on church leaders. Uncomfortable questions beg answers from organizations that have continued to push ahead while encountering increasing problems with the missionaries working on the fields. The time is ripe for re-evaluation, as a growing awareness of the importance of pastoral care for missionaries is developing in key leaders in the region.”¹⁶⁵ He goes on to say “Efforts must be redoubled to direct emerging missionary movements towards specific ways that both preventive and restorative pastoral care can be offered to those serving Christ in other countries.”¹⁶⁶

Issues such as the frequency of medical checkups, vacation policies (in addition to “furlough”), and emergency situations need to be determined and communicated clearly to all involved.¹⁶⁷ The sending church in its rush to send missionaries can easily overlook these issues. The stress that these (and other) situations bring to a cross-cultural missionary can determine how well that missionary functions in the mission field setting and how successful his ministry ends up being.

Often the financial situation of the sending church does not lend itself to any sort of ongoing visits by the missionary’s pastor or other pastoral figure. The

¹⁶⁵ Shaw, 148.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Lane, 67 (My translation).

calculation of the amount of funds necessary for the missionary to live on the mission field does not take the issue of pastoral care into account. “To invest time and money in providing pastoral care for the missionaries on the field is not always understood as a good investment by the church leaders.”¹⁶⁸

This is another area in which a seasoned sending agency can be of great service to a sending church. By educating the sending church on the need for pastoral care and the potential long-term consequences of not providing such care, the agency has helped the church to take steps to avoid a potential crisis situation.

Throughout the entire process of the recruitment, selection, and training of the missionary, there will need to be care taken to protect the confidentiality of both self-revelations by the candidate and comments by those who act as references for the candidate. Ethics, not to mention Christian charity, require that information received by the sending agency be treated carefully and not be allowed to be disseminated broadly. During the selection process there will need to be access to such information by those in decision-making positions, but always with the understanding that the missionary’s privacy be protected. If the agency cannot protect such information, it will lose its credibility among all sectors: candidates, sending churches, providers of references, and receiving agencies.¹⁶⁹

Other Policies

Other important personnel policies must be made eventually. In order to avoid a loss of respect by all involved, such policies are better made before they are

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 151.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 66 (My translation).

needed than at the time they are needed. Such policies include the issues of dating and marriage while on the field.¹⁷⁰ The transfer of personnel from one field to another is another such policy. Insurance issues have become important over the past few years, and the decisions regarding what kinds of insurance (life, medical, vehicle, renters') are required and how they will be paid need to be made early in the process of creating the sending agency.¹⁷¹

Strategy Issues

Another area that is easily overlooked in the rush to send a missionary is the strategy or strategies that he will use on the field. If the future missionary is well read and knowledgeable about both the culture to which he is going and general missiology, he may have in mind even before he leaves for the field what it is he wants to do in terms of strategy. The sending church may not even be thinking about strategy and any related issues. The sending agency may have an existing strategy that it would like for the missionary to implement, or it may want him to integrate into an existing team and utilize that team's strategy.

It may be too optimistic to think that the future missionary will have such knowledge of missiology and the culture to which he is going. In many cases, it is only after language study and a time of adaptation to the new culture that the new missionary begins to see the realities of the situation in which he finds himself. If he determined strategy before leaving his home country, he may find that he had based

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 43.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 68.

his strategy on assumptions that were colored by his own culture and which are not shared by the culture in which he will be living and working.

So, who determines the strategy the missionary will follow? Does the missionary determine it? Does the sending church determine strategy for a culture that it knows nearly nothing about? Or does the sending agency provide a strategy based on prior knowledge and perhaps existing personnel in that culture? Each of these options has advantages and disadvantages.

Not only does the question of who makes strategy need to be determined, but also who can change it needs to be determined beforehand. The Hondurans will do well to read Larry D. Pate's comments on the example in Acts 15 of what could happen if an administrative organization were to try to control the strategy decision-making process.¹⁷²

The sending church is likely to pay little attention to this detail of strategy until there is a conflict. Perhaps the missionary begins to realize once he is on the field that his preconceived ideas about the culture are incorrect and need to be revised. If he decides to change direction and sends word back to the sending church that he has decided to do something other than what he had announced to the sending church, there could be a strong reaction on the part of the sending church to this unilateral decision to change strategy. The sending church, still looking at the situation through its own cultural prism, may not understand the inappropriateness of the original strategy in that particular culture.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Pate, 378.

¹⁷³ I have a friend here in Panama who is currently experiencing this situation. He came without knowing anything about the culture and is trying to introduce one of the newest fads in church growth in the United States. That fad presupposes certain things about the culture that are not true here.

In an earlier chapter I wrote briefly about the importance of having a strong missions committee that is well informed on missiological principles. Here is an example of how such a committee could be of service to both the sending church and the missionary. The committee could prepare both the church and the missionary for the possibility that the receiving culture might require approaches to ministry very different from those employed in the sending culture. The missionary might also be better prepared for adaptation to that receiving culture through an orientation conducted with him and the missions committee.

However, the people who are financing his ministry are convinced that this approach will work anywhere and are not going to want to entertain the idea that the missionary change his strategy.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

The first step of the thesis project was the compilation and delivery of the manual of questions to the working group. This manual served as a starting point for their discussions of what kind of sending agency they needed and would endeavor to create. Their initial reaction to the manual seemed to be surprise at the number of issues they would need to decide before they could send any missionaries. However, at the next meeting several of the members made comments about how thorough the manual was and that it was just the right amount of questions. One participant said, “It has neither too many, nor too few questions. It seems to be just right.”

According to César Peña, one of the driving forces behind the creation of this sending agency, the manual served to stimulate them to action. There had been interest on the part of a small group of individuals to create an agency, but there had not been any real movement toward the realization of those efforts to create a sending agency for Honduran Baptists.

Over a period of approximately two years, the working group met repeatedly until they had worked through most of the questions in the manual.¹⁷⁴ Once they had answered most of the questions, they were ready to begin forming the agency.

¹⁷⁴ See Appendix B for their answers to the manual questions.

The decision to create the agency as a legal entity was made in January 2006 at the annual meeting by the messengers sent from the local churches. Once that approval was given and a board of directors was chosen, the paperwork was begun for the legalization process.

Since the creation of the manual was done at the very beginning of the thesis project, there was a tremendous amount of knowledge that I did not possess. Since that time I have read more extensively on the subject, attended conferences related to the subject, and have talked at length with both North American missionaries and Latin Americans about the issues raised in the manual. On numerous occasions I have looked back at the manual and have been glad to see that I had included certain issues that it was only much later that I came to realize were as important as they are to the creation of a sending agency.

I believe the timing was just right for my participation in the movement among Honduran Baptists to create a sending agency. The few people who saw the need for the agency had not been mobilized to start working on the project until I initiated that movement. My follow-up calls and meetings enabled them to keep the momentum going until they reached a point where there was sufficient self-motivation to continue the efforts without my participation. It is interesting to note that such a point was reached almost simultaneous to my move from Honduras to Panama. God's timing can clearly be seen in this project.

At least three of the four goals of this thesis project that were outlined in chapter one were met. The only goal that may not have been fully met was the urgency to create the sending agency. In spite of the sense of urgency on the part of

a few key individuals, the Honduran Baptist Convention as a whole did not appear to sense that urgency. While I had hoped that the agency would be fully functioning by the time this thesis was written, that has not happened. Apparently enough of an urgency was created to stimulate the process, but that sense of urgency was not widespread.

The fourth goal of the thesis, that the agency be indigenous, merits comment. As stated in chapter one, it would have been very easy for the Honduran Baptists to appropriate what others had created for themselves. They did not do that, however. They faced the challenge of making very difficult decisions and responded admirably. By recognizing some of the characteristics of Honduran Baptist churches and institutions, they were able to begin creating an agency that will not only be able to send Honduran Baptists, but also one which will be a reflection of who they are as followers of Jesus Christ.

Other groups that desire to create an indigenous agency may copy this success story. Those groups may make decisions very distinct from those made by the Honduran Baptists, but as long as the decisions reflect the culture of that agency's constituency, then the integrity of the indigeneity principles remains intact.

Update

The Honduras Baptist Convention will convene for its annual meeting in January 2006 and will consider the working group's proposals. The working group's members anticipate there being changes made to their proposals, but they fully expect the Convention's messengers to approve the creation of the sending

agency. Once the approval has been given, the Convention will begin the legal process of creating an agency.

In 2005 Honduran Baptists helped send three cross-cultural missionaries, two to India and one to North Africa. The lack of a sending agency has been obvious in at least one of the two cases. A young woman who went to India wrote to tell me that the agency she and her partner were sent through changed its mind and decided not to give the logistical support that had been promised beforehand. I was able to facilitate their visa renewal by linking her with a member of my Doctor of Ministry cohort in a neighboring country.

The board members have been very pleased with the response from Honduran Baptists in the financial support they have received. In 2004 a missions fund was begun in the names of Larry and Jean Elliott, longtime IMB missionaries in Honduras who were killed in Iraq after having transferred there. There are two special offerings taken each year for this missions fund, and these funds are being used to legally organize the sending agency and to enable it to begin functioning.

The board of directors sees three goals for itself now. First, they need to write the constitution of the sending agency and formalize that organization. Second, they need to communicate the vision for the agency and educate the local churches in how they can help to send cross-cultural missionaries. They have begun a quarterly newsletter that should help considerably in this area. Third, they need to raise more funds, both for the agency itself and for the missionaries who are being sent out. As the first two goals are met, the last one should be made considerably easier.

Results

Time and time again I have been able to utilize things that I discovered during the research for this thesis in mobilizing Latin Americans in both Honduras and Panama. Whether it was in sermons or during conference workshops, I have been able to share the biblical foundation for cooperation, agencies, cross-cultural missions efforts, and the need for all churches to have a global missions emphasis rather than a local-only emphasis.

The biblical basis for Latin Americans to do global missions has also informed my efforts in mentoring young pastors. I am currently working with six pastors on their development as leaders and shepherds for their congregations. I am confident that the fruit of the studies done on the theological foundation for cross-cultural missions will be seen over the next several years as these men lead their congregations to have a global emphasis on missions. Perhaps even one of these men will be called of God to serve in cross-cultural missions.

Nearly 20 years ago there was a volunteer missions organization here in Panama that trained young people for several months and then sent them to different parts of the country to work in evangelism and discipleship. This organization slowly ground to a halt after a few years. The former director of that organization is very much interested in resurrecting that vision. His seminary thesis was on the work of that organization and what would be needed to improve it.¹⁷⁵ Upon my arrival in Panama I began to fan the spark of interest in this kind of organization. Shortly thereafter he traveled to Venezuela to participate in a training event for a

¹⁷⁵ Jose Anibal Martinez A., *El Programa de los Misioneros Voluntarios en Panamá* (Tesis para Licenciatura en Teología, Seminario Teologico Bautista de Panamá, 1993).

missionary sending agency that is directed by his former mentor. The spark has moved from being a small flame to being a powerful, burning desire to rekindle the missionary spirit among Panamanian Baptists.

It is my dream to return to having such an organization here in Panama for the purpose of training and utilizing home missionaries. Part of my strategy for enabling the Panamanians to arrive at a global missions emphasis is for them to realize they are capable of sending same-culture missionaries to the different provinces of Panama.

Such an organization could be utilized at a future date for the sending of cross-cultural missionaries, whether as an interim agency until a more appropriate one is created, or, with adjustments, as a sending agency for both home and foreign missions. This, of course, is a major component of my mobilization efforts. Whether the Panamanian Baptists need one mission organization that does both home and foreign missions, or separate organizations is up to them to decide.

The volunteer missionary organization may also serve as a proving ground for future cross-cultural missionaries. Numerous pastors have told me that their call to ministry was confirmed during their participation in the volunteer missionary program. A South American missionary to North Africa told me that it was through the difficult experiences of church planting in his own country that he was prepared by God for the difficulty of living in a Muslim country. He had pleaded with his church to send him right away, but they had wisely allowed him to work his way into the foreign field by proving himself and honing his resistance in his own land.

Recommendations

Before this manual could be used with another group desiring to create an indigenous sending agency, several things would need to be done with it. First, it was obvious from the answers the Hondurans provided to several questions that they did not understand the question as it was posed. These questions have been reworded in the master copy of the manual, but have been left as they were in both Appendices A and B.

Second, some type of written introduction would need to accompany the manual in order to explain the reasoning behind these particular questions. Many more questions could have been posed, but these were the ones that seemed most pertinent at the time to the Honduran Baptist situation. Since I knew all the members of the Honduran working group, and I had the opportunity to meet with them as a group and to explain the purpose of the questions, there was never any introduction written to accompany the manual.

Third, the manual could easily be expanded to include many more questions. In the original version, numerous questions went unanswered by the Hondurans. It is possible that they believed they were not yet ready to make those decisions, but it is also possible that they simply preferred not to have to deal with some issues. As stated earlier, the initial reaction to this manual was surprise at how many questions there were. While a more thorough manual might be intimidating to another working group, it would also be more beneficial to them in the end.

I would highly recommend to the Hondurans that they document the progression of the creation of the sending agency. One reason for this is so that the

agency will have historical documents to consult when trying to decide if policies need to be changed. Understanding the reasoning used in making the original policy may benefit the agency as it attempts to determine if circumstances have changed enough to warrant such a policy change.

Another reason for the documentation process is so that other groups can learn from the experiences of the Honduran Baptists. While the process may be different for another group, that group may still be able to learn valuable lessons by seeing what the Hondurans did right and well as by seeing what they did wrong. Such documentation would certainly help me in my efforts to enable other Baptist conventions to create indigenous sending agencies.

Final thoughts

The four goals with which I began this thesis have been met in varying degrees. Doubtless, I would have liked to have seen a Western-style agency with all the trappings that tend to impress us Westerners, but I am satisfied with having gotten the process started with the creation of the manual and the gentle reminders to continue to meet and work toward the creation of the sending agency. I am also satisfied that there appears to be growing momentum in the mobilization of Honduran Baptists through the creation of this indigenous sending agency.

The fact that there is not a Western-style agency is actually the first sign of success for the Honduran Baptists in their journey to fulfill the Great Commission and to have a global missions perspective. The fact that they do not have a Western-

style agency also legitimizes my underlying thesis that any sending agency created by the Honduran Baptists must be indigenous.

The name chosen by the Hondurans for this sending agency, “Open Windows,” causes me to ponder the length of time this open window of opportunity to Latin Americans might last. At present there are thousands of Latin American missionaries working in cross-cultural missions, many of them in closed- or limited-access countries. In many ways they are more adept at taking the gospel into these countries than are their North American and Western European counterparts. They, and their message, are more accepted than I would be in the same places.

Governments, both national and local change, and the circumstances that affect the presence of these missionaries in such places can easily change, also. It is my dream to see many more Latin Americans sent as cross-cultural missionaries before these open windows of opportunity close.

APPENDIX A

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE MANUAL OF QUESTIONS

The Structure of the Sending Agency

How many members will be on the executive board?

What constitutes a quorum?

Do you want to call it the executive board?

How will members be chosen initially?

How long will members serve?

How will new members be chosen?

How will new members be chosen in case of a resignation?

How will the executive board vote? (How many votes needed, simple majority?)

How often will the board meet?

Only when business needs to be transacted?

Every quarter?

How are changes made to this timing? Unanimous vote?

Is there a way to remove a member?

What are the bases for removal?

How is a member replaced if removed?

What responsibilities will board members have?

What offices will there be?

How can you keep the agency “thin” without a lot of bureaucracy?

How will candidate applications be dealt with?

Who can submit an application? Only members of member churches?

What will be the process for handling an application until determination?

Who will represent the agency to the churches? How often?

What kind of legal status is required by Honduran law?

What kind of legal status will be best for working internationally?

What will be the name of the agency?

Is this name easily recognizable for Honduran Baptists?

Is this name acceptable for working in sensitive areas?

What is the vision statement for the agency?

What is the mission statement for the agency?

What will be the cost of “overhead” for the agency?

Where will those funds come from?

What kind of “advertising” will the board do among the churches?

Will there be a central office?

Will the agency be run out of someone’s home or office?

Where will the start-up funds come from?

How will founding members be chosen?

How will those whose names appear on the legal forms of the agency (founding members) relate to the board?

Do you want there to be an independent fiscal?

How would you choose that person?

How does his/her vote count?

Does the fiscal have to sign off on any and all decisions made?

Are meetings open to anyone?

If so, who can attend?

If so, who can speak, when can they speak?

If not, are there any legal issues related to closed meetings?

If not, are there any ethical issues related to closed meetings?

Agency Relationships

How will the agency relate to the national convention?

Will it be a part of the convention, or perhaps an auxiliary?

Will it be separate from the convention, but accountable to it?

How will the agency relate to the executive board of the national convention?

How will the agency relate to the Honduras Baptist Mission (IMB)?

Will you want an observer or liaison from the mission?

Will you try to send missionaries through the IMB if that ever becomes possible?

How can you best represent all associations without having a large organization?

How will the agency relate to the sending church?

With whom will it relate?

How can the agency relate to individual Baptist churches?

Will board members travel to represent the agency to local churches?

How will the local churches communicate interest to the agency?

Will the agency send regular reports to the churches?

Can missionaries be sent from non-CONIBAH churches?

Funding Issues (Including Tentmaking Issues)

How much is needed for salary, ministry expenses, etc.

Are there any limits on where those funds can come from?

How to fund emergencies (what constitutes an emergency).

How to fund supervisory visits.

How to fund furlough or deputation.

Who can give?

Who can they give to? (bank, church, personal account)

Who can have access to the bank accounts?

Who does the accounting?

Who does the audit?

How often is an audit done?

How is the audit paid for?

How much is required to maintain a missionary?

How much support must be raised before a missionary can leave for the field?

When does the monthly pay go out? (first of month, twice, end of month)

When should donations be given? (monthly cut-off date)

When does the missionary's salary begin? (During orientation, the day the missionary leaves for the field? During "deputation?")

How will the expenses of the agency be paid for?

Tent-making issues

How much time should be spent on mission work?

What happens to the profits?

How much previous experience should a candidate have in that particular area?

Personnel Issues

Selection of candidates

What are the criteria for selecting candidates?

What is the minimum time as a Christian?

What is the minimum time in the sending church?

What if candidate has multiple “supporting churches”, how long should he have had a relationship with them?

What is the minimum education level?

What is the minimum physical requirement?

What kind of local church experience should the candidate have?

What kind of experience in cross-cultural interaction should he have?

How long should candidates have been married before being sent?

What should the maximum age (if any) be of children who would accompany their parents be?

How will you communicate acceptance or rejection to the candidate?

Will you require a physical exam by a physician you choose?

Recruitment of candidates

Will the agency actively recruit missionary candidates?

How will they do this?

Will the agency publicize opportunities for service?

How will they do this?

What if a candidate is recruited whose church does not send him?

What if they do not endorse him?

What if they do not want to financially support him?

Training of candidates

What level of training should the candidate have before leaving for the field?

Whose training of the candidate is acceptable?

That of his local church?

That of another mission sending agency?

Which ones?

How much language ability should the missionary have before leaving for the field?

Supervision of missionaries

Must the supervisor of the missionary have been a missionary or his pastor?

How often will the missionary be evaluated?

Should he be evaluated by someone in addition to his supervisor?

If the missionary's pastor is his supervisor, what happens if the pastor leaves the church?

How often will someone in a supervisory position visit the missionary on the field?

How will this be paid for?

Termination of missionaries

What steps should be taken in order to terminate a missionary?

How should the agency respond if the sending church terminates the missionary?

What actions would cause a missionary to be terminated?

Member care

How can the agency contribute to the missionary's well being while on the field?

What will the agency do in case of emergency?

Will the agency require regular medical exams on the field?

Who will pay for them?

How will pregnancies be treated?

What kind of vacation policy will the agency have for the missionaries (without returning home)?

Confidentiality Issues

Confidentiality issues related to the candidates

Can anyone outside the board of directors see the candidates' files?

Can candidates see what their references have said about them?

How can candidates' confidentiality be guaranteed?

Confidentiality issues related to the missionaries

Can anyone outside the board of directors see the missionaries' files?

How can missionaries' confidentiality be guaranteed?

Other Policies

What are the policies regarding marriage and dating on the field?

Is dating permitted between missionary and national?

Will a newly married missionary spouse need to be appointed?

Will a missionary who marries while on the field be required to return home for any period?

What are the policies regarding the interruption of ministries by catastrophe or political upheaval?

Who makes the decision whether a missionary stays or leaves?

What are the policies regarding the transfer from one field to another?

What are the policies regarding insurance issues?

Must the missionary have insurance coverage?

Will insurance be paid on the field by the missionary in those cases where it is appropriate?

Should there be any policies regarding the education of missionary children?

Should there be any policies regarding the payment of bribes?

What period of time constitutes a term of service?

Will there be any distinction between "short-term" and "career" missionaries?

Will there be any demands placed on the furloughing missionaries by the agency in terms of participation in missions conferences, convention events, etc.?

Strategy Issues

Who makes strategy?

Who can change strategy?

Who decides where to go?

Who decides what to do?

If the sending church makes the strategy, does it have to be approved by the agency?

Do any changes to strategy have to be approved by the agency?

If strategy is determined by the agency, what are the criteria for determining that strategy?

For domestic missions, what determines whether the agency is used or not?

Can a church starting a mission in the next town use it?

APPENDIX B

MANUAL DE PREGUNTAS CON RESPUESTAS

La Estructura de una Agencia de Envio de Misioneros

1. ¿Cuántos miembros tendrá la junta directiva?

Presidente, Secretario, Tesorero, Fiscal, Promotor.

2. ¿Cómo estará constituido el quórum?

La mitad mas uno.

3. ¿Le querrán llamar la junta directiva/ejecutiva?

Junta Directiva

4. ¿Cómo serán escogidos los miembros inicialmente?

Deben ser personas comprometidos con las misiones, con un corazón misionero, y que a la vez, estén haciendo misiones, o dispuestos a comenzar misiones.

5. ¿Por cuánto tiempo servirán los miembros?

Dos años sujeto a cambios.

6. ¿Cómo se escogerán nuevos miembros?

Al finalizar el periodo de los miembros de la junta directiva, se elegirán los nuevos miembros de acuerdo al trabajo realizado por los candidatos.

¿Cómo se manejará la situación en caso de renuncia de uno de los miembros?

Debe elegirse un suplente por cada uno de los miembros de la junta directiva, en caso de renuncia, de uno de ellos.

7. ¿Cómo votará la junta ejecutiva?

¿Cuántos votos serán necesarios o simplemente por mayoría?

Por unanimidad.

8. ¿Con que frecuencia se reunirá la junta?

Cada seis u ocho semanas.

¿Solo cuando hay asuntos para ser tratados?

¿Trimestralmente?

¿Cómo se deciden los cambios a la frecuencia de reuniones?

¿Por voto unanime?

9. ¿Debe haber una manera de destituir a un miembro?

Sí.

¿Cuáles deben ser las bases para destitución?

Si el miembro no ha cumplido con la función que le corresponde,

deberá ser destituido, o por algún problema espiritual.

¿Cómo se reemplaza la posición disponible?

Por el suplente.

10. ¿Cuáles serán las responsabilidades de los miembros de la junta?

Planificación, organización, capacitación, motivación, oración, información y promoción, envío.

¿Tendrán una oficina aparte o funcionará de la casa de algún miembro?

Una oficina aparte, si es posible.

11. ¿Cómo pueden mantener una estructura “delgada” sin mucha burocracia?

12. ¿Cómo se manejarán las aplicaciones de los candidatos?

A través de las iglesias locales.

¿Quién puede someter aplicaciones?

Pastores de las iglesias locales.

¿Solo miembros de iglesias registradas?

Interdenominacionalmente.

¿Cuál será el proceso que se le dará a una aplicación de principio a fin?

Evaluación espiritual, inventario ministerial, evaluación física, evaluación psicológica, otras.

13. ¿Quién representará la agencia ante las iglesias?

Cada miembro de la junta directiva de la sociedad misionera.

¿Con que frecuencia?

En cada asamblea o consejo ejecutivo.

14. ¿Qué tipo de estado/representación legal necesitará esta agencia de acuerdo a

leyes Hondureñas? ¿Especialmente trabajando internacionalmente?

Personería jurídica.

15. ¿Cuál será el nombre de esta agencia? (Especialmente concientes de que estará trabajando con areas restringidas del mundo)

Ventanas abiertas.

16. ¿Cuál será la misión y el propósito planteado de esta agencia?

Reclutar, preparar, y enviar misioneros a la ventana 10/40.

¿Quieren elaborar una expresión de la visión y la misión de la
agencia?

Miembros de la agencia.

17. ¿Que tipo de promoción publicitaria tendrá la agencia ante las iglesias?

Radio, televisión, escrita, verbal.

18. ¿Cual será la relación entre las personas cuyos nombres aparecen en los
papeles legales de la junta/organización y sus directivos rotatorios?

19. ¿Debería existir un fiscal independiente?

No.

¿Como escogerían tal persona?

¿Como contarían su voto?

¿Tendría esta persona que dar su visto bueno en algunas o todas las
decisiones tomadas?

20. ¿Las reuniones de la junta serán abiertas para cualquier interesado?

No.

¿Si lo son, serán solo oyentes o pueden participar (hablar)?

¿Quién puede hablar, cuando pueden hablar?

¿Si las reuniones son cerradas, hay algún problema legal o ético con
esto?

No.

Las Relaciones de la Agencia de Envío

1. ¿Cómo se relacionará la agencia con la convención?

La agencia dará la pauta a la convención acerca del trabajo misionero transcultural.

¿Será parte de la convención, o auxiliar a la convención

Parte de la convención.

2. ¿Cómo se relacionará la agencia con la junta directiva de la convención national?

Relación unilateral.

3. ¿Cómo se relacionará la agencia con la Misión Bautista Internacional (IMB)?

¿Desearían tener un observador o un miembro de enlace entre ambas agencias?

No.

4. ¿Tratarían de enviar misioneros a través de la IMB si eso se vuelve en una posibilidad?

No.

5. ¿Cómo se relacionará la agencia con la iglesia que envía el misionero?

(Lectura libro de los Hechos)

¿Con quien específicamente se relacionará?

Pastor o ministro de misiones.

6. ¿Cómo se relacionará la agencia con las diferentes iglesias Bautistas?

¿Visitarán los miembros de la junta a las diferentes iglesias?

Sí.

¿Se enviará reportes regulares a las iglesias?

Sí.

7. ¿Se podrán enviar misioneros de iglesias no afiliadas con CONIBAH a través de esta agencia?

Sí.

Financiamiento

De la Agencia

1. ¿De donde saldrán los fondos para iniciar el funcionamiento de esta agencia?

Iglesias locales, Convención.

2. ¿Cual será el costo de mantener esta agencia y de donde saldrán los fondos?

Convención e iglesias locales.

3. ¿Qué tipo de fondos serán éticamente aceptables?

Ofrendas.

4. ¿Cómo se canalizarían esos fondos dentro de la agencia (cuentas individuales para misioneros, un solo fondo para todos los misioneros, cuenta para gastos propios de la agencia, etc.)?

Cuentas individuales para cada misionero.

5. ¿Quién debe tener acceso a las cuentas bancarias?

Tesorero y fiscal.

6. ¿Quién será el contador?

Tesorero.

7. ¿Quién será el auditor y con que frecuencia se hace?

Fiscal, semestralmente.

8. ¿Se destinarán fondos para pagar contador y auditor?

Sí.

Del Misionero

1. ¿Cuánto se necesita para mantener un misionero (familia misionera) en el campo misionero?

Dependiendo del campo (Entre 500 y 3500 dólares)

2. ¿Cuánto se destinará para su salario?

El 40% del costo total del proyecto.

3. ¿Cuánto se destinará para los gastos del ministerio?

4. ¿Cuánto se destinará para gastos de emergencia y que constituye una emergencia?

Muerte, accidente, enfermedad crónica, etc.

5. ¿Se destinarán fondos para visitas de supervisión o de apoyo al misionero?

Iglesias locales.

6. ¿Cuánto debe recaudarse antes de que el misionero salga al campo?

El costo de dos meses de proyecto en el campo, pasajes de ida y regreso.

7. ¿Cuánto se destinará para su salario durante tiempo de licencia y promoción del trabajo misionero en su país?

El 25% durante su licencia.

8. ¿Cuándo se le pagará (al principio o al final del mes)?

Principio.

9. ¿Se tendrá una fecha límite mensual para la aceptación de donaciones?

No.

10. ¿Cuándo comienza el misionero a recibir su salario, durante el período de entrenamiento (orientación), el día que sale para el campo, etc.?

Dependerá de los casos en ocasiones, Cuando sale al campo.

Misionero Hacedor de Tiendas (que genera parte de sus propios ingresos)

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo le dedica al trabajo misionero?

Entre el 65% y 80% de su trabajo en el campo.

2. ¿Qué hace con sus propios ingresos?

Los administra de acuerdo a los planes establecidos por el ministerio de misiones.

3. ¿Cuánta experiencia se requiere del misionero en en determinada area?

Intermedia.

Personal Misionero

Selección de Candidatos

1. ¿Cuáles son los criterios para la selección de candidatos?

Ver Apéndices.

¿Cuál es el tiempo mínimo como cristiano?

Cinco años.

¿Cuál es el tiempo mínimo como miembro de la iglesia que lo envia?

Tres años.

¿Cuál es el nivel mínimo de educación requerido?

Secundario.

¿Cuál es el mínimo nivel físico requerido?

Optimo.

¿Se requerirá un examen médico? ¿médico elegido por la agencia?

Sí.

¿Qué tipo de experiencia con la iglesia local debe tener el candidato?

Haber plantado una iglesia autóctona.

¿Qué tipo de experiencia trans-cultural debe tener el candidato?

Lo que establezca el centro de capacitación.

¿Cuánto tiempo deben haber estado casados los candidatos antes de ser enviados?

Tres años.

¿Cuál debería ser la máxima edad (¿debe haber una?) de los hijos que acompañaran a sus padres al campo misionero?

Ninguna.

2. ¿Cómo se comunicará la aceptación o rechazo de los aplicantes?

Verbalmente, escrito.

Reclutamiento de Candidatos

1. ¿Hará la agencia reclutamiento activo de candidatos?

Iglesias locales.

¿Si lo hacen, cómo lo harán?

Conferencias misioneras.

2. ¿Publicará la agencia oportunidades de servicio?

¿Cómo lo hará?

Escrito, TV, radio.

3. ¿Qué pasa si un candidato es reclutado y su iglesia no lo envía?

No irá.

¿Qué tal si su iglesia no lo recomienda?

No irá.

¿Qué tal si su iglesia no lo quiere apoyar financieramente?

No irá.

Entrenamiento de Candidatos

1. ¿Qué tipo de entrenamiento debe tener el candidato antes de salir al campo?

Intermedio, completo.

2. ¿Qué tipo de entrenamiento es aceptable?

Teológico, secular.

¿El obtenido en su iglesia local?

No.

¿El obtenido por otra agencia misionera, etc.?

Sí.

3. ¿Qué tipo de proficiencia con el lenguaje debe tener el misionero antes de salir al campo?

Supervisión de los Misioneros

1. ¿Debe el supervisor en el país de origen, haber sido misionero?

No.

2. ¿Debe el supervisor en el país de origen, ser el pastor de la iglesia local del misionero?

No.

3. ¿Con qué frecuencia debe ser evaluado?

Trimestralmente.

4. ¿Debería ser evaluado por alguien más que su supervisor?

No.

5. ¿Si el pastor del misionero es el supervisor, qué pasa si el pastor deja la iglesia?

La agencia deberá dirigir a la iglesia local para la continuación del trabajo misionero en el lugar, mientras el nuevo pastor toma el lugar.

6. ¿Con qué frecuencia alguien en el rol de supervisor deberá visitar al misionero en el campo?

Cada dos o tres años.

7. ¿Quién será el supervisor del misionero en el campo?

Los misioneros del equipo que se encuentren en el campo y que sean parte del trabajo misionero nacional.

Terminación de Misioneros

1. ¿Qué pasos deben tomarse para despedir a un misionero?

Ver apéndices.

2. ¿Cómo debe responder la agencia si la iglesia quiere despedir al misionero?

Unánimemente.

3. ¿Qué tipo de acciones meritan un despido del misionero?

Violar los términos y condiciones establecidos por la agencia de envío.

Cuidado del Misionero

1. ¿Cómo puede contribuir la agencia al bienestar del misionero en el campo?

Ver apéndices.

2. ¿Qué hará la agencia en casos de emergencia?

Responder de manera inmediata.

3. ¿Requerirá la agencia exámenes físicos regulares?

Sí.

¿Quién pagará por ellos?

La misma agencia.

4. ¿Cómo se manejarán los casos de embarazos?

Habrán requisitos establecidos por la agencia y dependerá de los casos.

5. ¿Cuál será la política con respecto a vacaciones (sin regresar a casa)?

Aceptable.

Confidencialidad

Confidencialidad concerniente a los candidatos y misioneros

1. ¿Puede alguien fuera de la junta directiva ver el expediente de candidato o misionero?

No.

2. ¿Puede el candidato o misionero ver lo escrito en las referencias de otros sobre ellos?

No.

3. ¿Cómo se garantiza la confidencialidad de los candidatos y misioneros?

Otras Políticas

1. ¿Cuáles son las reglas concernientes al matrimonio o noviazgo durante servicio en el campo?

Ver apéndices.

¿Se permite el noviazgo o matrimonio entre misioneros y nacionales?

No.

¿En caso de matrimonio con alguien en el campo, se comisionaría el nuevo cónyuge como misionero?

Dependerá de las pautas establecidas por la agencia misionera.

¿Si el misionero se casa en el campo de servicio, se le pedirá que vuelva a casa por un período de tiempo?

No.

2. ¿Cuál será la política concerniente a la interrupción del ministerio debido a un catástrofe o condiciones políticas hostiles?

El misionero deberá ir a un país cercano al del campo y esperar que la situación en el campo se normalice.

¿Quién toma la decisión sobre la evacuación o permanencia del misionero en el campo?

La agencia en conjunto con la iglesia local.

3. ¿Cuál es la política concerniente al traslado de un misionero de un campo a otro?

Las que establezca la agencia de envío.

4. ¿Cuál es la política concerniente a las pólizas de aseguranza sobre el misionero (seguro de vida, seguro médico, seguro de automóvil o vivienda)?

5. ¿Debe haber una política concerniente a la educación de los hijos de los misioneros?

Sí.

6. ¿Cuánto debe durar cada período de servicio misionero en el campo?

Dos a tres años.

7. ¿Deberá existir alguna distinción entre misioneros comprometidos por un período de servicio de tiempo determinado y misioneros comprometidos a un servicio indefinido?

Sí.

8. ¿Dará la agencia a los misioneros en período de licencia periódica en el país algunas responsabilidades como participación en conferencias de misiones,

eventos de la convención, promoción de misiones, reclutamiento de misioneros, etc.?

Sí.

Estrategias del Trabajo Misionero

(Metodologías usadas para cumplir la Gran Comisión; por ejemplo, enfocándose en grupos étnicos no alcanzados, enfocándose en áreas rurales o urbanas, etc.)

1. ¿Quién determina las estrategias?
2. ¿Quién puede cambiar las estrategias?
3. ¿Quién decide donde ir y que hacer?
4. ¿Si la iglesia enviadora determina las estrategias, tienen estas que ser aprobadas por la agencia?
5. ¿Si las estrategias son determinadas por la agencia, cuales son los criterios para determinar esa estrategia?
6. Concerniente a misiones domésticas (dentro del país), ¿qué determinará si la agencia se involucra o no?

¿Podría una iglesia que está comenzando una misión en un pueblo vecino usarla?

APPENDIX C

UN TALLER SOBRE EL COMITE DE MISIONES

I. Introducción

A. ¿Por qué tener un comité de misiones?

1. ¿Quién en su iglesia promueve las actividades de misiones?
2. ¿Quién informa a la iglesia sobre las necesidades de misioneros en el mundo?
3. ¿Quién mantiene al día la lista de misioneros hondureños en el mundo para que la iglesia ore por ellos?
4. ¿Quién investiga las comunidades sin el evangelio pero con personas interesadas en oírlo para saber donde plantar iglesias?

B. ¿Cómo beneficia a su iglesia?

1. La iglesia mira hacia fuera como Cristo quiere.
2. Los miembros de la iglesia se concientan y se comprometen cuando hay una meta en común.
3. Los miembros de la iglesia dan diezmos y ofrendas cuando hay una razón que les interesa

II. Base bíblica

- A. Hechos 1:8 Para todas iglesias (cuatro areas: local, cerca/misma cultura, cerca/cultura similar, hasta los fines del mundo)
- B. Hechos 1:14 Esperar en oración para recibir el poder del E.S. (Hechos 10:1-9 ambos Pedro y Cornelio estaban orando cuando Dios les habló)
- C. Hechos 2:1-4 Sed llenos del E.S. con un propósito – La experiencia en si no fue el propósito de la llenura del E.S.
- D. Hechos 6:1-6 Nombra personas para servir a los necesitados (primer comité de misiones?)
- E. Hechos 13:1-3 Hay que usar semilla buena (Bernabé y Saulo) para tener buena cosecha (hay que ofrecer los líderes en obediencia y como sacrificio)
- F. 2 Tim. 2:2 Entrena a los líderes
- G. Las cartas de Pablo

III. Dinámica – Estudio en grupos de preguntas sobre la iglesia en Los Hechos

IV. Reporte de grupos

V. El comité de misiones – consiste de entre 5-7 (ideal) hermanos que están dispuestos a leer y aprender acerca de misiones, dispuestos a trabajar, y con un interés en misiones.

VI Los propósitos de un comité de misiones –

A. Visualizar – ayudarles a poder ver y creer en la posibilidad; pasado vs. futuro

B. Educar

1. del papel de la iglesia local en misiones mundiales (4 areas)
2. oportunidades para hacer misiones locales y mundiales
3. estrategias correctas versus “lo que hicieron los gringos”
4. entrenar y equipar a los miembros para el servicio
5. entrenar el comité de misiones de la iglesia sembrada

C. Informar

1. sobre el progreso de los ministerios y misiones de la iglesia
2. sobre los planes para el futuro (de corto plazo y de largo plazo)
3. del bienestar de los misioneros, sus éxitos, luchas, etc.
4. hacer recomendaciones para actividades futuras

D. Enfatizar

1. la oración por misiones y misioneros (Mateo 9:38)
2. ofrendas pro misiones

E. Supervisar

1. el plan de misiones de la iglesia
2. los pastores de las iglesias sembradas
3. el desarrollo de líderes en las iglesias sembradas
4. la visión y metas de las iglesias sembradas

VII La diferencia entre ministerios y misiones

A. Ministerios son aquellas actividades de la iglesia que se realizan con el fin de expresar el amor del Señor Jesucristo. Pueden ser evangelísticas o pueden ser de simplemente de con el fin de ayudar a los necesitados, sean cristianos o no.

B. Misiones son aquellas actividades que tienen como su meta el cumplimiento de la Gran Comisión en hacer discípulos y agruparlos en congregaciones (siembra de iglesias).

VIII Sembrando iglesias (plural) – planear, llevarse a cabo, entrenar, organizar en iglesia.

Pasos: oración, saturación con el evangelio, evangelizar, discipular, formar iglesias.

IX. La evaluación de un comité de misiones – ¿Está cumpliendo los propósitos?

- X. Conclusión** – Un comité de misiones es indispensable para una iglesia que desea cumplir con la Gran Comisión. Beneficia a la iglesia local y mundial y al reino de Dios. Consulta con su pastor y busca a los colaboradores.

Preguntas para el estudio del libro de los Hechos

¿Qué hace el Espíritu Santo en esta sección?

¿Qué ocurre y quien lo hace en cuanto la proclamación o testimonio o predicación?

¿Hay persecución? ¿Cuál es la reacción de los creyentes ante la persecución?

¿Cuáles son los resultados en cuanto las conversiones y las reuniones de creyentes o la iglesia?

¿Cómo se ve la iglesia, y qué hace la iglesia?

APPENDIX D

**AN EXPLANATION OF THE ROLE OF THE MISSIONS
COMMITTEE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

Without broad-based support within the sending church, it is unlikely that the missionary will be able to depend on the overall support of the sending church or churches over a prolonged period of time. Because of the natural tendency to atrophy and lose momentum, there needs to be a large pool of potential supporters, whether that support is moral, organizational, economic, prayer, communication, or in the area of readaptation to the sending culture.

In order for a sending or supporting church to maintain a high level of attention to the missionary, it is necessary to have more than just one or two people promoting missions in the local church. While there may be a small group that considers itself part of the mission team, these will also need the support of the wider church body. This is especially true if the entire church has a sense of global missions and wishes to be responsible for the missionary.

The development of such wide support for global missions first needs to come through the initial education in missions and the issues related to sending and maintaining a missionary. Secondly, there often needs to be training for those who offer to be responsible for a specific area within the mission team because the tasks are so different from what is typically done in church work. As the mission team or

committee continues its work, there will need to be continued encouragement so that the momentum is not lost. There may also be the need for updating skills as the involvement of the team evolves over time. The church may send other missionaries and require the participation of others who would require initial training as well.

In working with a church that is interested in having a global missions vision, the question may arise, “Why have a missions committee?” That question might reflect the reality that there is no one within the church who is actively promoting global missions efforts. If there is no one taking the responsibility for promoting missions, then there is little hope that the long-term support of a missionary can be accomplished. Likewise, if there are only one or two people interested in promoting global missions, the church is likely to think that they have the missions “thing” covered.

The first thing a committed church would need to do is to promote global missions in an integrated fashion within the church. Instead of simply making announcements or inserting statistics into the church’s bulletin, there needs to be an approach that integrates missions consciousness in every aspect of the church’s life. For example, the youth can study about missions and prepare a dramatic or puppet presentation to the children’s groups. The children’s groups can write letters to the children of missionaries either on their birthdays or as regular pen pals. The music ministry can incorporate missions oriented songs into the worship time. The men’s and women’s groups can be responsible for specific projects that in one way or another implement a global mission emphasis.

A second question of “How will this benefit my church?” may also be asked. Since there is a natural tendency for churches to focus on themselves, a global missions team is able to shift part of that focus on the lost people outside of the church. This is what Christ had in mind when he founded the Church and empowered it to take the gospel to all peoples. Also, as more people become aware of both needs and opportunities, they are likely to become committed to working toward the achievement of a common goal. They will also tend to give more tithes and offerings to the church when they see a global missions emphasis.

It is important to give the biblical basis for global missions. While many churches may talk about missions in general, it is very possible that they have never studied the emphasis placed on global missions in the Bible. As they begin to see how God stresses the need to take His message to people in all parts of the world, they will begin to realize the impact that has on their particular church. One part of the biblical basis can be a study on the book of Acts. A few questions asked of the text will allow the church members to see patterns within the book of Acts. These patterns support a global emphasis on missions and give a clearer idea of what the New Testament Church looked like.

When the time is right, the church will want to either create a missions committee or restructure an inefficient one. A good size for a missions committee is between five and seven people. These members will want to enlist others to help them, but this core group can form the principal part of the missions team. The members of the team should not be chosen on any other basis than their interest in global missions. They must be willing to continuously learn about missions

involvement and be committed to working to achieve the church's global missions goals.

There are several purposes for the church's global missions team. The first one is help the church develop a vision for global missions. In the present Honduran Baptist milieu it is difficult for the average church member to be able to visualize his participation in global missions. Normally the church's focus is on trying to get more people to attend church and the difficulty of that task can make global missions seem like an impossibility. When the global missions team begins to help the church develop a vision for extending God's kingdom "to the uttermost parts of the earth," the church will begin to see that yes, they can do global missions.

This process of developing and casting vision tends to take quite some time. Then, just as it appears that the vision is beginning to be understood and accepted by the church body, it might be time to begin enhancing that vision and making it even more challenging. The vision development process is an ongoing process in many cases.

A second purpose of the global missions team is to educate the congregation. First it will want to educate the church on its role in global missions. Then it will want to educate the church on the possibilities that exist for that particular church to become involved in global missions. The education of the church in effective strategies is another area in which the congregation will need to be educated. As team members and others are enlisted, they will need to be educated and trained in the areas of their basic responsibilities.

The third purpose of the team is to inform the church. They will want to inform the church of the missionary's welfare on the mission field (or progress toward arriving there). Health, financial, and spiritual needs will be communicated on a regular basis to the entire congregation so that they may respond appropriately. This important task can easily be overlooked or under appreciated by a church that does not have a history of global missions emphasis. The progress of the missionary's work on the field will also be communicated periodically to the church. Any short- or long-term plans the team might be considering in any field, domestic or foreign, will be shared with the church as well as any recommendations regarding current or future plans.

The fourth purpose of the global missions team is to coordinate prayer and giving emphases. While the church will want to continuously be praying for the missionary, there will doubtless be special seasons of prayer for the missionary, the field in which he serves, and for the ones that God wants to call out to do missions. Likewise, there should be continuous giving to missions, but there may also be special offerings taken at specific times of the year. The missions team will want to plan these events carefully and far enough in advance that they will be able to have successful prayer and giving campaigns.

The fifth, and last, purpose of the global missions team is to supervise any mission points that the church assigns to them. These will often be local missions where the team can easily access the new work area in order to see the progress. In the case of foreign missions, it is possible that the church would not empower them to be involved in the supervision of the missionary. It is possible, however, that

some churches would want their global missions team involved in the supervisory process of the cross-cultural missionary.

In conclusion, the role that the missions committee plays in the local church can determine to a great extent the missions participation of that church. If there is no such group of interested individuals, or if they are unsure of how to function, the church will most likely only talk occasionally of global missions, and will do very little about participating in them. Every church needs to have a global missions focus, and a missions committee in each church makes that focus more likely.

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www.om.org (Operation Mobilisation)

www.thegreatcom.net (The Great Commission)

www.peopleteams.org (People Teams)

www.calebproject.org (Caleb Project)

www.Prolades.com (Latin American Socio-Religious Studies Program)

www.missionsmobilisation.com (Missions Mobilization Network)

www.pueblos.org (Pueblos)*

www.devjobs.org (Devjobs - job announcements in development fields)

www.scruples.org

www.actdev.org (Association of Development in Tunisia job announcements)

www.missionarytraining.org (Missionary Training Service)*

www.middleamericaregion.org (Middle America Region, IMB)

<http://www.globalopps.org/index.htm> (Global Opportunities)

www.globalmissions.org (Global Missions)

www.mrd.org (Mission Resource Directory)

www.missiology.org (Missiology)

www.acmc.org (Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment)

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<http://www.antiochnetwork.org/> (Antioch Network)

<http://awm.gospelcom.net/site/display3.php?article=16> (Arab World Ministries)

VITA

Dave Clines was born on December 1, 1958 in Pontiac, Michigan to the late Eugene Clines and Mary Hendricks Clines. He graduated from Oakland University in Rochester Hills, MI with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Arts in 1981. During his college years he worked for General Motors and was active in the Baptist Student Union, serving twice as campus BSU president and once as a summer missionary near Buffalo, NY.

Dave then moved to California where he attended Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley. He graduated in 1984 with a Master of Divinity degree and after having served as minister of youth at Primera Iglesia Bautista del Sur in San Francisco. His call to ministry with Hispanics occurred during that time.

After graduation from seminary, Dave moved to Tegucigalpa, Honduras to teach in a Christian school and to continue learning Spanish. While there he met and married Nancy Elizabeth Posadas in 1986. They have two daughters, Gina Marie, and Lauren Daniela.

Dave has served as a church planter with the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and currently serves with the International Mission Board as Country Strategy Coordinator in Panama. He finished his Doctor of Ministry thesis in 2006 and will graduate in 2007.